

BLUE JACKETS

OF

1812



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THE BATTLE OF LAKE CHAMPLAIN.

BLUE JACKETS OF 1812

A HISTORY OF THE NAVAL BATTLES OF THE SECOND
WAR WITH GREAT BRITAIN

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED AN ACCOUNT OF

THE FRENCH WAR OF 1798

BY

WILLIS J. ABBOT

AUTHOR OF BLUE JACKETS OF '61

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY W. C. JACKSON AND H. W. McVICKAR

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BLUE-JACKETS OF 1812.

CHAPTER I.

THE GATHERING OF THE WAR-CLOUD.—THE REVOLUTION ENDED, BUT THE WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE YET UNFOUGHT.—OUTRAGES UPON AMERICAN SAILORS.—THE RIGHT OF SEARCH.—IMPRESSMENT.—BOYHOOD OF COMMODORE PORTER.—EARLY DAYS OF COMMODORES PERRY AND BARNEY.—BURNING A PRIVATEER.—THE EMBARGO.—WAR INEVITABLE.



IN a bright November afternoon in the year 1783, the streets of New York City, bordering on the bay, were crowded with excited people, pushing and elbowing each other rudely, and all pressing down to the water-side, where was collected a huge crowd, looking anxiously across the broad waters of the noble bay, to a spot where lay anchored a large squadron of ships. The taut cordage,

the trimly squared yards, and the rows of cannon protruding from the open ports made it evident to the veriest landsman that many of the ships were men-of-war; while the scarlet flags crossed by the emblem of St. George, flaunting from the peak of every vessel, declared the allegiance of the fleet to the monarch of Great Britain, against whose rule the hardy Colonists had been for years waging a warfare, now to end in victory. Between the ships and the landing-place of old Fort George, that then stood where now extends the green sward of the Battery park, a fleet of long-boats was actively plying; the long, swinging strokes of the blue-clad sailors stamping them as men-o'-war's men beyond doubt. The landing-place was thronged with troops, whose glistening muskets, scarlet coats, gold trimmings, and waving plumes contrasted beautifully with the bright blue jackets of the sailors, as file after file of the soldiers boarded the boats, and were rowed away to the waiting ships. The troops drawn up on the shore formed long lines of scarlet against the green background of the bastions of Fort George. The men standing at rest talked loudly to each other of the coming voyage, and now and again shouted fiercely at some soberly clad citizen who strolled too near the warlike ranks; for had not all the sturdy citizens of New York come down to see the hated British evacuate the city, forced out by the troops of Gen. Washington (plain *Mr.* Washington, the British liked to call him)? The ragged gamins scurried here and there, yelling ribald jests at the departing soldiers; and the scarlet-coated troopers had hard work keeping down their rising anger, as suggestive cries of "boiled lobsters" rose on every side. Even the staid citizens could hardly conceal their exultation, as they thought that with those soldiers departed forever the rule of Great Britain over the Colonies. It was a quaint-looking crowd that had gathered that day, at the end of the little town. The sturdy mechanics and laborers, who were most numerous, were dressed in tight leather or yellow buckskin breeches, checked shirts, and flaming red flannel jackets. Their heads were covered with rusty felt hats, cocked up at the sides into a triangular shape, and decorated with feathers or bright buckles. On their feet were heavy leathern shoes, fastened with huge brass buckles that covered the

entire instep. Here and there in the crowd stood a prosperous merchant or man of fashion, whose garb, if less rough than that of his humbler



DERELICT.

fellow-citizen, was no less odd and picturesque. At first sight, an observer might think that all the men of New York were white-haired; but a closer examination would show that the natural color of the hair was hid by dense layers of white powder. The hair was done up in a short cue

tied by black ribbons, and on top of all rested a three-cornered cocked hat, heavily laced with gold or silver braid. The coat was light-colored, with a profusion of silver buttons, stamped with the wearer's monogram, decorating the front. Over the shoulders hung a short cape. The knee-breeches, marvellously tight, ended at the tops of gaudy striped stockings, which in turn disappeared in the recesses of pointed shoes adorned with gleaming buckles. The broad cuffs of the coat-sleeves were heavily laden with lead, to keep them in proper position.

Such were the characteristics of the crowd that had assembled that day to witness the closing scene of British domination in America. Even as they stood there, they heard, faintly rising on the autumnal air, the sound of the fife and drum, as the American troops came marching down into the city, from their camp at the upper end of the island. And, as the last boat-load of grenadiers pushes off from the shore, the crowd, no longer restrained by the glittering bayonets, rushes down to the water's edge, and hurls taunts and gibes after the retreating boats, until the grizzled old soldiers curse the "Yankee rebels" fiercely, under their mustaches, and beg the officers to give them a volley.

Now the advance guard of the little American army, with fifes shrilling out the notes of "Yankee Doodle," comes marching down to the fort. No gay trappings, scarlet or gold lace about these soldiers, but ragged suits of homespun and homely flint-lock muskets, whose barrels are better burnished within than without. They march quickly to the water-front, and halt. The captain looks at the British squadron, now getting under way, and then, with true soldierly instinct, flashes a glance to the top of the flag-staff in the centre of the fort. His brow contracts, he stamps his foot, and the soldiers and citizens who have followed his glance break out into a cry of rage that rings far out over the placid waters of the bay, and makes the tough old British veterans chuckle grimly over the success of their little joke upon the Yankees; for there, high above the heads of the wrathful crowd, flaunting its scarlet folds over the roofs of the liberated city, floats proudly the BRITISH FLAG.

"Tear it down!" The cry rises hoarsely from a thousand throats;

and the Colonial officer springs with glittering sword to cut the halliards, but finds them cut away already, and the flag nailed to the mast. Then a



CUTTING AWAY THE FLAG.

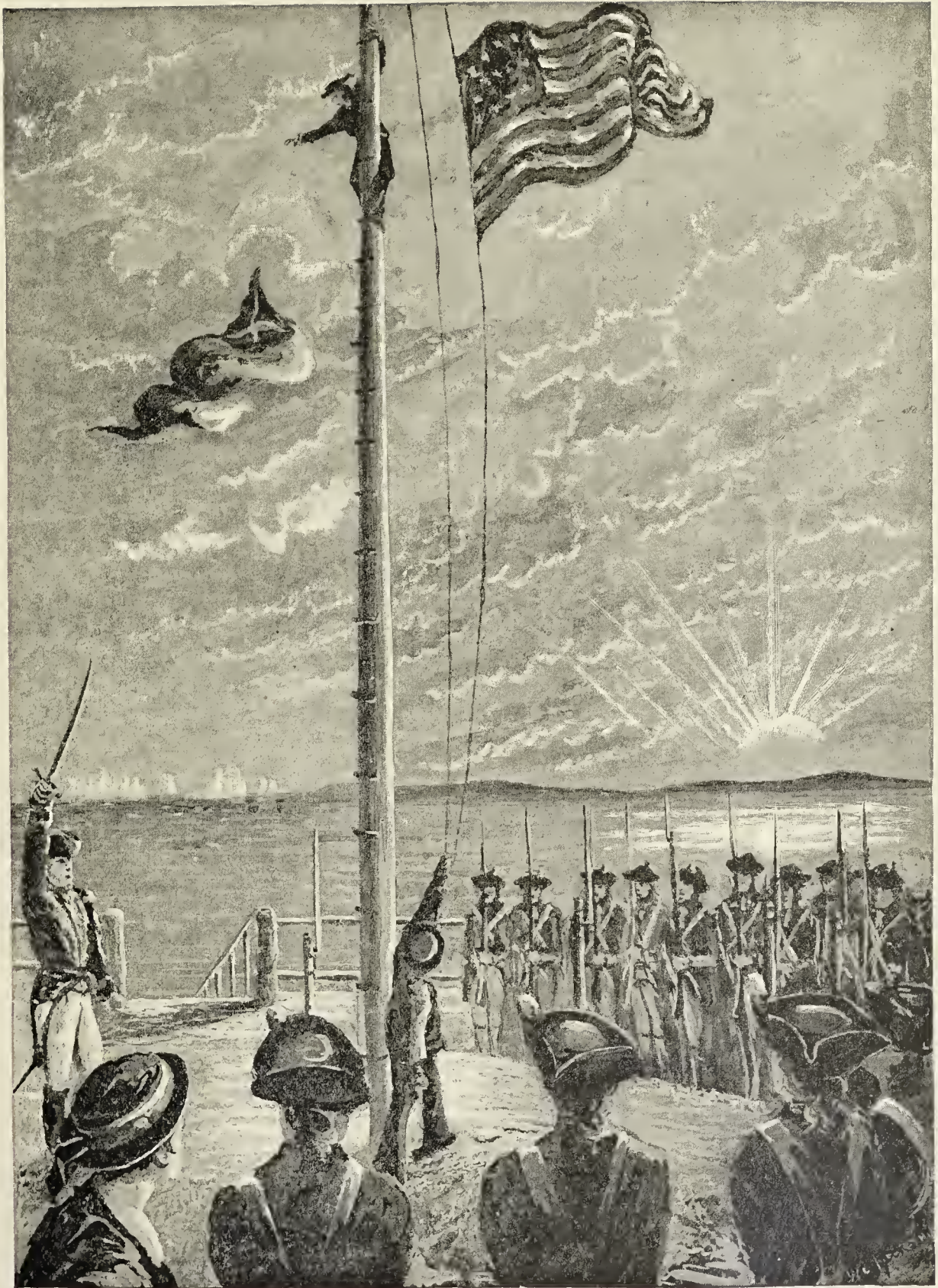
trim sailor-boy works his way through the crowd, and, grasping the pole firmly, attempts to climb up, but soon slides down ingloriously over the greasy surface, freshly slushed by the British before their departure. The crowd yells in wrathful impotence; and a few hot-headed youths spring

forward, axe in hand, to bring down pole and all to the earth. But the firm hand of the commanding officer restrains them. He whispers a few words into their ears; and they start briskly away, followed by a dozen or two of the steadily growing crowd.

“Gen. Washington will be here soon,” says the captain; “we must get that rag down at once.”

In a few minutes the messengers return. They have been to a neighboring hardware store, and startled the gray-haired old merchant so that he stared vaguely at them through his spectacles, as they fiercely demanded hammers, nails, and wooden cleats. Loaded with these, they dash back to the scene of action; and again the sailor-boy becomes the hero of the moment. With his pockets filled with cleats, and his mouth stuffed with nails, he begins again his ascent of the slippery staff. He nails cleat after cleat upon the pole, and step by step mounts toward the top. At last he reaches the flag; and, with a few quick jerks, it is torn from the pole, and thrown contemptuously out into the air, to float down upon the crowd, and be torn to pieces by curiosity seekers. Then the halliards are lowered, and soon the flag of the young and struggling nation floats in the cool breeze; while from the neighboring heights the cannon of the forts speak in deep-mouthed salvos of applause, that mingle with the rejoicings of the people, and do not cease until the ships of the enemy have passed through the Narrows, and are out of sight and hearing. The British had evacuated New York, and America had won her independence.

Not many years, however, had passed after this memorable event, when the citizens not only of New York, but the people of all the United States, began to find out that America had not won her true independence, but merely a slight relief from the oppressions of Great Britain. Already the nations of Europe were beginning to encroach upon the rights and liberties of the infant nation. For this the States were themselves greatly to blame. Nobly as they had fought in unison to throw off the yoke of Great Britain, they fell into strife among themselves as soon as the war was at an end, and by their quarrels and bickerings led all the European nations to believe that the contentious Colonies, like the Kil-



THE LAST OF THE BRITISH.

kenny cats, would end by destroying each other. Such a nation could command little respect, and the stronger powers were not slow to show their contempt for the United States. American vessels, coming back to port, would report that a British ship-of-war had halted them in mid-ocean, and seized American sailors as suspected British deserters. Other American ships, sailing full of hope from American ports, would never re-appear, and their fate would be a mystery, until, after many months, some sailor wandering home told of his ship's capture by a French privateer or Tripolitan war vessel. For years a debasing tribute was paid to the Bashaw of Tripoli, upon condition of his granting to American ships the privileges of the sea, that are the undoubted rights of every nation; yet even this compact was more often ignored than observed. Small wonder was it that the sage old statesman, Benjamin Franklin, on hearing a young man speak of the "glorious war for independence," responded gravely, "Say rather the war of the revolution: the war for independence is yet to be fought."

In the year 1789, the States, after much debate and bickering, finally ratified the document known as the Constitution of the United States. While the work of the American Revolution was thus being completed, and a new nation was being formed, events were transpiring on the other side of the Atlantic that were destined to affect gravely the growth of the new nation. The oppressed peasantry and laborers of France, smarting under the wrongs of centuries, rose in a mighty wave, and swept away the nobles, their masters. The royal head of King Louis fell a prey to the remorseless spirit of the guillotine, and the reign of terror in Paris began. Soon the roll of the drum was heard in every European city, and the armies of every nation were on the march for France. England was foremost in the fray; and the people of the United States, seeing their old enemy at war with the country of Lafayette, fired by generous enthusiasm, were ready to rush to the aid of their old ally. But the wise prudence of their rulers restrained them; and for the next twenty years the United States were neutrals, while all the nations of Europe were plunged in war.

The first effect of this condition of affairs was most beneficial. As neutrals, the ships of the United States could trade with all the battling peoples; while any vessel flying a European flag was sure to find an enemy somewhere on the broad seas, and suffer confiscation. While France was giving her farmers and mechanics to follow in the glorious footsteps of Napoleon, the industrious citizens of the United States were reaping a rich reward in trade with the warring nation. The farmers received the highest prices for their grain, the ingenious mechanics of New England reaped fortunes from the sale of their wares, and the shipyards were filled to their greatest capacity with the graceful frames of fast clipper vessels destined for the trade with Europe. In 1780 the shipping of the United States was confined to a few coasting-vessels, and the American flag was seldom seen beyond the Atlantic. Fifteen years later, the white sails of American ships dotted every sea, and but few European ports did not show some trim clipper floating in the harbor, bearing at her peak the stars and stripes.

From Maine to Georgia the people were building ships, and manning them. The vast forests resounded with the strokes of the woodman's axe, getting out the timber; and the seaport towns were given over to shipwrights, who worked day and night at their craft. In New England there sprung up a race of hardy seamen. Boys of twelve or fourteen ran away to sea, made a coasting voyage or two, and, after a voyage to some European port, became captains of ocean-going ships,—often before they were twenty years of age. The people of the coastwise towns of New England can tell of hundreds of such cases. There was "Nat" Palmer of Stonington, who shipped when a boy of fourteen, and, after four years' coasting, was made second mate of the brig "Herselias," bound around Cape Horn, for seals. On his first voyage the young mate distinguished himself by discovering the South Shetland Islands, guided by the vague hints of a rival sealer, who knew of the islands, and wished them preserved for his own trade, as the seals swarm there by the hundred thousands. The discovery of these islands, and the cargo of ten thousand skins brought home by the "Herselias," made young Palmer famous; and, at the age

of twenty, he was put in command of a sloop, and sent to the South Seas again. One day he found his passage in the desired direction blocked by two long islands, with a narrow opening between them. To go around the islands would have been a long voyage; and the young captain headed his craft for the opening, but soon found himself on the rocks. Luckily, the vessel backed off, and the crew set about repairing damages. While thus engaged, the great, blunt head of a whale was seen in the narrow channel; and, after blowing a column of water high in the air, the monster swam lazily through the strait. "If a whale can go through that channel, I can," quoth "Cap'n Nat." And he forthwith did so. Quick of observation, and prompt of action, the sailors of the United States became the foremost seamen of the world, and guided their little vessels over every known sea.

But the growing commerce of the United States was destined to meet a series of checks, that seemed for a time likely to destroy it forever. England, jealous of the encroachments of the Americans upon the broad seas of which she had long called herself the mistress, began a series of outrages upon American ships, and, not content with acting in open hostility, incited the piratical rulers of Tripoli and Algiers to make war upon American shipping. In this volume it is not my purpose to tell of the means adopted by England to let the swarming ships of the Barbary pirates out of the Mediterranean Sea, to prey upon the vessels of the United States; nor do I intend to tell how, after peaceful arguments had been exhausted, Decatur and Preble, with a fleet of American vessels and a handful of fighting jack-tars, crossed the ocean, and thrashed the pirates of the Mediterranean into subjection. That may well be left for future consideration, and this chapter devoted to a history of the acts of insolence and oppression on the part of England, that finally forced the United States to declare war against a power so vastly superior to them in wealth, population, and military and naval strength.

The first great and crying outrage, protested against by the statesmen, the newspapers, and the people of the United States, was the so-called right of search. By this was meant the right claimed by every British

man-of-war to stop an American vessel on the high seas, muster her crew on the forecastle, and seize and carry away any sailor thought to be a native of Great Britain. This outrageous act was committed time and time again by the commanders of British frigates, who knew no easier way of filling up a short-handed crew than by stopping some passing vessel flying the stars and stripes, and taking from her the best-looking sailors of her crew. Hardly a week passed without the arrival of a ship at New York, New London, or any of the shipping towns of New England, bringing some such tale. The merchant-vessel, skimming lightly over the ocean, at peace with all the world, and with nothing to fear save the terrors of the storms, against which the sturdy mariners knew so well how to guard, would be suddenly halted by a shot from a frigate of a nation with whom the United States had no quarrel. A hail from the frigate told the American to come up into the wind, while a boat was sent aboard. Soon a long-boat filled with man-o'-war's men, and with a beardless young midshipman in the stern-sheets, came dancing over the water; and in a minute or two a lieutenant, the middy, and a few sailors clambered aboard the wondering merchantman. There was small ceremony about the proceedings then.

"Muster your men aft," quoth the middy peremptorily; "and you'd better be quick about it, too."

Perhaps the American captain protested, — they generally did, — and talked about the peace between the nations, and the protection of his flag; but his talk was usually of little avail.

"Get those men aft, and be quick about it," orders the British officer. "You've got deserters from his Majesty's service in your crew; and I'll have them. Do you want me to send the boat back for the marines?"

The American crew came aft unwillingly, grumbling, and cursing his Majesty's service under their breath, and formed a line before the boarding officer. That worthy whispered a minute or two with the boatswain and sailors who came aboard with him, and then, pointing out one man, boldly claimed him as a British subject. American captains declared that the man so chosen was generally the most ship-shape sailor aboard; and

indeed it seemed but natural that the English, in filling out their crew, should choose the best. Sometimes the American captain went on board the British ship, to protest against so summary a draft upon his crew. In such a case he was usually received with courtesy by the commander, but never did he regain his kidnapped sailors. The commander trusted in every thing to his first lieutenant, who boarded the merchantman; and that officer was thus made, in the words of an English journalist, "at once accuser, witness, judge, and captor."

The men thus pressed were expected to serve with all the zeal and bravery of regularly enlisted sailors. The slightest sign of hesitation or unwillingness was met with blows. A pressed man who refused to serve was triced up, and lashed with the cat-o'-nine tails until his back was cut to ribbons, and the blood spurted at every blow. Few cared to endure such punishment twice. Yet the sailors taken from the American ships lost no opportunity for showing their desire to get out of the service into which they had been kidnapped. Desertions from ships lying near the coast were of weekly occurrence, although recaptured deserters were hanged summarily at the yard-arm. Sailors who found no chance to desert made pitious appeals to the American consuls in the ports at which they stopped, or wrote letters to their friends at home, begging that something should be done to release them from their enforced service. It was not the severity of man-o'-war discipline that so troubled the poor fellows: many of them were old man-o'-war's men, and all would have been glad of berths in the United States navy; but the sight of the red flag of Great Britain waving above their heads, and the thought that they were serving a nation with which their country had just fought a bloody war, were intolerable.

One "pressed man," on a British ship lying in the West Indies, managed to write the following letter to a newspaper editor in New York, and, after much planning, succeeded in mailing it.

PORT ROYAL, JAMAICA, June 30, 1811.

MR. SNOWDEN,—I hope you will be so good as to publish these few lines. I, Edwin Bouldin, was impressed out of the barque "Columbus" of Elizabeth City,

and was carried on board his Britannic Majesty's brig "Rhodian," in Montego Bay, commanded by Capt. Mowbary. He told me my protection was of no consequence, and he would have me whether or not. I was born in Baltimore, and served my time with Messrs. Smith & Buchanan. I hope my friends will do something for me to get my clearance; for I do not like to serve any other country but my own, which I am willing to serve. I am now captain of the forecastle, and stationed captain of a gun in the waist. I am treated very ill, because I will not enter. They request of me to go on board my country's ships to list men, which I refused to do, and was threatened to be punished for it.

I remain a true citizen of the United States

EDWIN BOULDIN.

Pathetic letters such as this appear often in the columns of the newspapers published in the early part of this century, and are usually accompanied by petitions from the relatives and friends of the pressed man, begging that Congress take some action to secure American sailors from such outrages. But year after year the practice went on, and higher and higher grew the enmity between England and the United States. Among the sailors who suffered impressment at the hands of the British were many who afterward in the naval battles of the ensuing war won ample revenge from the nation that had so abused their liberties.

Most prominent of all these men was David Porter, who, from the humble station of a cabin boy on his father's ship in 1796, rose in twenty years to be commodore in the United States navy. The name of Porter is one famous in the naval annals of the United States; and probably there never existed a family in which the love for the life of a fighting jack-tar was so strong as among these representative American sailors. David Porter, sen., and Samuel Porter served the American Colonies dashing upon the sea in the Revolution. Of David Porter, jun., we shall have much to say in this volume. Of his children, the eldest, William D., rose to the post of commodore, United States navy, and died of wounds received in the civil war; Henry O. Porter was first lieutenant of the "Hatteras" when she sunk before the fire of the Confederate ship "Alabama;" Thomas Porter served in the Mexican navy; Hambleton Porter

died of yellow-fever while a midshipman in the United States navy; Lieut. Theodoric Porter, U.S.A., was the first officer killed in the Mexican war; and Admiral David D. Porter, U.S.N., by virtue of his exploits on blue water and in the ditches and bayous back of Vicksburg during the civil war, now stands at the head of living naval officers.

But to return to David Porter. He was sixteen years old, when, in 1796, his father, having obtained command of a vessel in the West India trade, determined to take the lad to sea, that he might learn the profession of his ancestors. It was hardly a favorable time to inspire an independent boy with admiration for the life of an American merchant sailor. The United States had no navy to protect its merchant ships; and the British cruisers that scoured the ocean felt little hesitation about boarding the ships of the infant nation, and kidnapping such sailors as they might desire. Of this young Porter soon had evidence. While his ship, the "Eliza," was lying in the port of Jeremie in San Domingo, a British frigate came into the harbor, and dropped anchor near by. One morning the lookout on the "Eliza" saw a boat, manned by armed men, put off from the frigate, and steer for the American merchantman. The movement was quickly reported to Capt. Porter, who was too old a seaman not to know what it portended, and too plucky an American to submit willingly to any indignity. His preparations were quickly made; and by the time the frigate's boat came alongside, the crew of the "Eliza" were armed and ready to rush to the deck at the first alarm. Capt. Porter with his officers and son stood on the quarterdeck, and awaited with great dignity the arrival of the boat. Soon the British came alongside; and an officer in the stern-sheets announced that he was about to board the "Eliza," and demanded to search the vessels for deserters from the British service.

Capt. Porter replied that his was an American ship, and the British might board at their peril; for he was armed, and would resist the boarders to the last extremity. A great laugh went up from the boat alongside. A Yankee merchantman to resist British sailors, indeed! And the officer, without more ado, ordered his men to board. Hardly had the order passed

his lips, than Porter's clear voice rang out, "Repel boarders!" and the crew of the "Eliza," armed with pikes and muskets, rushed upon their assailants, and drove them into the sea. Young Porter was not behind-hand in the fight, but lent his boyish aid to the vindication of American sailors' rights. One man was shot down by his side; and Porter received his first baptism of blood in this encounter, which thus early rooted in his mind a detestation for the arrogance of the British, and a determination to devote his life to the cause of his seafaring countrymen.

On his second voyage, a year later, young Porter was destined to experience still further the hardships and ignominy which American sailors only too often encountered at the hands of the British. Once again the boy, now a first officer, was walking the deck of his vessel in a San Domingo port, when a boat's-crew from a British frigate came on board on the usual errand of impressment. This time the sturdy, independent spirit of the elder Porter was absent; and the captain of the American vessel basely permitted a portion of his crew, among whom was Porter, to be carried aboard the frigate, where they were to be kept until they agreed to enlist. Loaded with irons, they were thrust into "the brig," or guard-room of the frigate; but, though the case seemed hopeless, Porter gallantly refused to enter the king's service, and ceaselessly exhorted his comrades to stand firm against the commands of the British. Days passed, and still the frigate's crew was in no wise increased from among the obstinate Americans. The British captain lost patience, and commanded that all the prisoners be brought out on deck, triced up, and publicly flogged with the cat-of-nine tails, for "the bad example they set the crew of his Majesty's ship." The order was duly put into execution. The prisoners, still ironed, were brought up under a heavy guard, and taken to the gratings; but when young Porter reached the deck, and saw the ignominious punishment in store for him, he fought desperately with his guards, and, finally breaking away, ran below, and hid in some corner of the hold, from which the most careful search failed to dislodge him. The captain finally gave orders to leave him alone, saying, "He'll come out fast enough when he gets hungry." But the lad did not wait for

hunger to drive him from his hiding-place. That very night he came from the hold, crawled stealthily across the deck, and dropped into the water, regardless of the sharks that abound in those tropic seas. A short swim took him to a Danish vessel, by which he was carried across the Atlantic. Only after many months of voyaging as a common sailor did the lad succeed in working his way back to his home.

Even this experience could not deter the young seaman from again seeking employment upon the billowy main, and for the third time he shipped upon an American merchantman. Again his course lay toward the West Indies, and again he was intercepted by the inevitable man-of-war. This time he was not so fortunate as to escape until after a month or more of captivity, during which time he was treated with the greatest cruelty on account of his persistent refusal to serve under any flag save that of his own country. At last he made his escape, and reached home. By this time he was naturally somewhat disgusted with the life of a sailor on an American merchant-vessel; and he cast about for an appointment to the navy, which he soon received. It is impossible to doubt that his three adventures with the British press-gang had much to do with the ardor and bravery with which in later days the young sailor, then elevated to the highest ranks, did battle with the enemies of his country. When, at the close of the War of 1812, the veteran naval officer looked back upon his record during that conflict, he could point to one captured British man-of-war and scores of captured British merchantmen as the measure of his retaliation for the wrongs done him as a defenceless American sailor-boy.

Oliver Hazard Perry, of whose famous victory over the British on Lake Erie we shall speak later, also was brought into conflict with the British in the days of the "right of search." His father, Christopher Raymond Perry, in command of the United States ship "Gen. Greene," was escorting an American brig freighted with a valuable cargo. Near Gibraltar they were sighted by a British man-of-war, which bore down quickly upon the two ships. Perry was an old and cautious naval officer; and, though peace reigned between his country and Great Britain, he no sooner saw an armed

vessel approaching, than he put his vessel in trim for action, and sent the crew to the guns. Nearer and nearer came the great English man-o'-war; and, as she came within range, a puff of smoke burst from her bow-port, and a ball skipped along the water before Perry's unarmed convoy, conveying a forcible invitation to heave to. Perry at once made signal to his convoy to pay no regard to the Englishman; and, setting the American flag, the two ships continued on their way. But at this moment the breeze died away, and all three ships lay becalmed within easy range of each other. The British captain was not slow to take advantage of this; and a boat soon put off from his ship, and made for the American brig. This move Perry promptly checked by a shot from the "Gen. Greene," which so narrowly missed the boat that the crew thought it well to run alongside the American man-o'-war, and arrange the matter peaceably. As the boat came alongside the "Gen. Greene," the gangway was manned, and the British officer escorted with the greatest formality to Perry's presence.

He at once stated his purpose in attempting to board the merchantman; claiming that, by virtue of the right of search, he was entitled to visit the brig, and examine into the nationality of her crew.

"I deny the existence of any right, on the part of British vessels, to search any American vessel, except with the consent of the American commander," responded Perry; "and my shot was intended to warn you that you had received no such permission."

By this time the British vessel had come within hailing distance of the "Gen. Greene;" and the captain demanded why his boat had been fired upon, and was now detained. Perry responded in the same words with which he had answered the boarding-officer.

"It's a most surprising thing," shouted the Englishman, losing his temper, "if a British seventy-four-gun ship cannot search a pitiful little Yankee merchantman."

"By Heaven!" responded Perry. "If you were a ship of the first rate, you should not do it, to the dishonor of my flag." And in an instant the ports of the "Gen. Greene" were triced up, and the British captain saw that his adversary was prepared for battle. After a moment's thought,

he abandoned all attempts at violence, and sent a courteous letter to Perry, begging leave to visit the brig in search of British deserters, which request Perry as courteously granted.

To this list of American seamen who suffered indignities at the hands of the British, and afterwards won reparation from their enemies in the War of 1812, may be added the name of Joshua Barney. Few Americans have given to their country a longer service or more efficient aid than he. In the little Colonial navy of the Revolution, he held high rank, and won the plaudits of older sailors. At the close of the Revolution, he served for a time in the merchant-marine; then entered the naval service of France, and, at the first news of war between England and America, returned to his country, to enlist under the stars and stripes. It was while he was in command of a merchantman that he was brought into collision with the British in a way that well might make the doughty old sea-dog doubt if the Revolutionary days, when he suffered in the noisome confines of Mill Prison, had not come again.

It was in the summer of 1793, that the good ship "Sampson," two days out from Cape François, West Indies, was slowly making her way northward, over the tropic seas, and under the glaring rays of the summer sun of the torrid zone. Capt. Barney and his crew were ever on the watch for danger; for, in addition to the hurricanes and typhoons common to the equatorial latitudes, much was to be feared from the lawless British privateers that then swarmed in the West Indies and Bermudas. That the "Sampson" was under the flag of a neutral power, was but little protection; for the commanders of the semi-piratical craft cared little for international law or for justice. War was raging between France and England; and a mere suspicion of traffic with French colonies was enough, in the eyes of these worthies, to condemn a vessel of any nationality.

Knowing his danger, Capt. Barney strove to avoid the localities frequented by the privateers, but to no avail. One bright morning, the lookout reported three sail in sight from the masthead, and in a few hours Barney found himself hemmed in by privateers. Three officers boarded him, and began a rigid examination of the cargo and papers. Two finally

expressed themselves as satisfied of the neutral character of the vessel; but the third exclaimed that he had discovered in the cabin an iron chest, full of money, which surely proved that the "Sampson" had something to do with the French, for "no blasted Yankee ever had iron chests or dollars on board his vessel!" Such conclusive proof as this could not be overlooked by the sapient privateers; and, after a little consultation, they informed Capt. Barney that they would let the ship go, if the money were given to them. As it amounted to eighteen thousand dollars, Capt. Barney looked upon this demand as nothing short of robbery, and indignantly refused to consider it; whereupon his captors took from the "Sampson" all her crew except the carpenter, boatswain, and cook, sent a prize-crew aboard, and ordered that she be taken to New Providence, a British naval station. The privateers were soon hull down on the horizon; and Barney found himself a prisoner on his own ship, exposed to ceaseless insolence from the British prize-master.

Several days passed, as the "Sampson" lay becalmed in the tropics. Barney, though too old a sailor to be cast down by misfortune, nevertheless chafed under his situation. From prize-master and prize-crew he received nothing but scurrilous epithets; and the oft-repeated murmurs of "Rebel rascal!" "Yankee traitor!" "Blow out his brains!" and "Throw him overboard!" made it hard for him to believe the Revolution over, and the United States and England at peace. Even while they thus abused the captain, the rogues were feasting upon his provisions and drinking his wines; and only his firm refusal to give up his keys prevented their rifling his iron chest, and filling their pockets with his dollars. At last he began to feel that his life was no longer safe in the hands of his captors; and, though he had by him but three men of his original crew, he determined to attempt to recapture the ship.

One evening the captain managed to catch a few minutes' conversation with the carpenter and boatswain of his own crew, and broached to them the project for a recapture. No argument was needed to induce these bold men to embark in the perilous enterprise. Indeed, from the very moment of the capture, they must have cherished some such purpose;



THE RIGHT OF SEARCH.

for each had hidden away in his bunk a gun and bayonet. Barney, on his part, had secreted a small brass blunderbuss and a broad-sword; and with this meagre armament the three determined to take the ship from its captors.

The success of the project then depended upon a favorable opportunity, and the three conspirators watched eagerly for the decisive moment to arrive. At last there came a day so squally that all the prize-crew were kept busy with the sails all the morning. Much exhausted, the sailors sat down to their dinner on the forecastle at noon, while the three British officers spread their mess amidships. Barney saw that the moment had arrived; and, giving the signal to his men, the plotters went below for their weapons. Barney was the first to re-appear, — the blunderbuss, loaded and cocked, in his hand, and the naked cutlass under his arm. Hardly had he stepped on deck when one of the officers saw him, and, throwing down dishes and dinner, sprang at the American and grappled with him. Barney struggled violently, and soon managing to get the blunderbuss against his enemy's shoulder, fired it, filling the wretch's arm and side with buckshot. Freed from his adversary, the gallant captain cut down with a blow of his cutlass the second prize officer, who was advancing upon him; and the third, seeing his two companions lying, drenched with blood, upon the deck, ran below. In the mean time the crew, startled from their dinner by the report of the blunderbuss, had rushed below for their weapons; but the last man had hardly dived down the hatchway when the wily carpenter and boatswain rushed forward, clapped on the hatches, and in a trice had the British sailors nicely cooped up in the forecastle. The two wounded officers were quickly cared for, and the unhurt fugitive secured; and Barney found himself again in control of the ship.

The victors then held a consultation as to their future action. They controlled the ship, it was true; but what were three men to do with a full-rigged ship on the stormy Atlantic? Clearly they must get aid from their captives, or all might go to the bottom together. Accordingly the three, with loaded weapons, went forward, and standing at the hatchway,

proposed terms to the imprisoned sailors below. Capt. Barney acted as spokesman.

"You shall be released from confinement," cried he to the captives,



BARNEY REGAINS HIS SHIP.

"and may now come on deck one at a time, each one bringing his weapons with him."

The hatches were then thrown back, and the carpenter and boatswain stood with cutlasses and muskets ready to cut down the first who

should make an offensive movement. The British saw the preparations for their reception, and came up one at a time as ordered. As each came up, his arms were seized and thrown overboard, and a gruff order given for him to go forward. Before long the crew, deprived of all means of resistance, were gathered on the fore-castle. Barney then retired to the quarter-deck, and ordered that the crew be mustered before him.

"You are now my prisoners," said he; "and I have not only the power, but the right, to hang every man jack of you. You seized this vessel without any just cause, and simply because you were the stronger; and you have further used that strength to abuse and ill-treat me and waste my property. I do not propose to execute you, but will give you the choice of two alternatives. You may either stay with me and work this ship to Baltimore, there to be discharged with wages; or I will give you a small boat with provisions, and set you adrift to shift for yourselves. One condition I attach to the first alternative. If one of you is seen talking with his former officers, or if one man steps abaft the main-mast, he shall be instantly shot."

The crew wasted no time in deliberation, but decided to stay with the ship, and at once went forward on duty. Then began a fortnight of ceaseless watchfulness and grave anxiety for Capt. Barney. At night he never closed his eyes, but took his sleep by day in an armchair on deck, his blunderbuss and cutlass by his side, and a sentinel ready to awaken him at the slightest alarm. At last, however, he brought his ship safely to Baltimore, and discharged his crew. But the memory of that month of violence remained with him; and we shall hear of him again as a brave sailor in the service of the United States, and an uncompromising foe to England.

Among the most adventurous of American merchant seamen in the days following the Revolution was Capt. Thomas Macdonough. Like others of his class, his daring and ability as a navigator gained him a commission in the very small American navy of that time. On one occasion the United States ship "Siren," of which he was first lieutenant, was lying at anchor in the harbor of Gibraltar, surrounded by a

number of merchantmen, from the peak of one of which floated the stars and stripes. While pacing the deck one bright afternoon, Macdonough observed a boat manned with armed men put off from a British man-of-war that rode at anchor a mile away. At once his suspicions were aroused, and with a strong glass he watched the movements of the British. As he had expected, the boat steered straight for the American merchantman; and through his glass Macdonough could see the boarders scramble over the bulwarks of the vessel, and soon thereafter return to their boat, taking with them a man dressed in the garb of a merchant seaman, and tightly bound.

The captain of the "Siren" was on shore; and Macdonough, as the officer in command, determined that so audacious an impressment should not succeed under the guns of an American war-vessel, small though she might be.

"Clear away the long-boat," he shouted; and the boat quickly was lowered to the water, and a dozen jackies grasped the oars. Macdonough sprang into the stern-sheets, and grasped the tiller.

"Let fall! Give way! Pull hard, men!" He gave the orders in quick succession, and laid his course straight for the British boat, which was soon overtaken. He laid his boat alongside the British cutter, and demanded that the captive be given up. The English officer began to protest, but Macdonough cut his protests short.

"You have no right to that man. He is an American sailor. — Tumble in here, my man."

The pressed man, delighted with the prospect of rescue, sprang into the American boat; and before the British officer had recovered from his amazement sufficiently to offer resistance, the blue-jackets were pulling away toward the "Siren," with the long, swinging, man-o'-war stroke. When he reached his vessel, Macdonough retired to his cabin to await further developments, which were not long in appearing.

"Boat from the British frigate heading for the ship, sir," reported the officer of the deck, in a few minutes.

"Very good, sir. Have the gangway manned," returned the lieutenant.

The boat was soon alongside; and the British captain, white with rage, leaped to the gangway, and was shown to Lieut. Macdonough's cabin.

"How dare you take a man from a boat of his Majesty's ship, sir?" was his salutation.

"'Dare' is not a word to be spoken to an officer of the United States navy," responded Macdonough. "As for the man, he is a citizen of the United States; and I propose to protect him, at all hazards."

"I'll bring my frigate alongside, and sink your beggarly little craft," shouted the visitor, with a volley of oaths.

"That you may do," responded the American; "but while she swims, the man you shall not have."

"You are a hair-brained young fellow, and will repent this rashness," cried the irate Briton. "Do you mean to say, that, if I had been in that boat, you would have dared to commit such an act?"

"I should have made the attempt, sir, at all hazards."

"What, sir!" shouted the captain, greatly enraged, "would you venture to interfere, if I should now impress men from that brig?"

"You have but to try it, sir," was the pithy response. And the British captain returned to his frigate, vowing all sorts of vengeance, but nevertheless did not again annoy the American ship.

While the popular clamor against the hateful right of search was still at its height in America, Great Britain unwisely added yet another outrage to the already long list of grievances complained of by the Americans. Notwithstanding the danger of Barbary pirates and British impressment, the merchants of the United States were carrying on a thriving trade with France. England, then at war with the great Napoleon, looked upon this commerce at first with disfavor, and finally with such intense hatred that she determined to put an end to it altogether. Accordingly, she issued the celebrated "Orders in Council," forbidding all traffic with French ports. For such action the imperious nation had no authority by any principle of international law. Her blockade of the French ports was very imperfect, and easily evaded. Readers of the "Blue-Jackets of '61"

will recollect the principle there stated, that a blockade, to be legal, must be complete and effective; otherwise, it is known as a "paper blockade," and neutral vessels are justified in attempting to evade it. Instead of posting blockading vessels at the entrances of French ports, to warn off all vessels, Great Britain contented herself with licensing hordes of privateers, that roamed the seas and snapped up vessels with little regard to law or justice. Hundreds of American vessels were thus captured; for our trade with France and the French West Indian colonies at that time was of vast proportions. The ocean soon became so infested with privateers that every American merchantman carried cannon, and an array of small-arms that would have done credit to a sloop-of-war. The New England sailors became able naval fighters, as well as experienced seamen; for a man shipping for a voyage knew well that, in addition to battling with the angry elements, he might be required to sight truly the great "long Tom," or beat back piratical boarders at the muzzle of the muskets. But even these heroic remedies could not save many a good ship.

Occurrences such as these fanned into flaming fury the smouldering fires of the American hatred for Great Britain. The people saw their old oppressor and enemy engaged in war with their old ally France, and the popular cry went up for a union of France and the United States against England. Happily, the statesmen of the time—Washington, Hamilton, and Jay—were too firm of purpose, and too clear-sighted, to be led away by popular clamor; and they wisely kept the United States Government in a position of neutrality between the two nations. Deep and loud were the murmurs of the people at this action. Could true-hearted Americans desert their friends in such a manner? Never! And so, whatever might be the policy of the rulers, the many-headed people welcomed French ambassadors, fêted the officers of visiting men-of-war, and hung the tri-color and the stars and stripes side by side on all public holidays.

It was in 1795, while the popular affection for France was at its height, that a merchant-vessel flying the British flag sailed into Boston Harbor, and made fast to the Long Wharf. Under her stern appeared

the legend, "The Betsy of St. Croix ;" her decks were littered with poultry and domestic animals, her cordage flapped loosely in the breeze, and every thing about her bespoke the merchant-vessel. Her captain, being hailed by the dock-loafers, and made the victim of the proverbial Yankee inquisitiveness, stated that he had just come from the West Indies with a load of *lignum-vitæ*, pineapples, and hides, which he hoped to sell in Boston. The self-constituted investigating committee seemed satisfied, and the captain strolled on into the city.

But the French consul at Boston was far from satisfied, and he took care to let his suspicions become generally known. "That innocent-looking merchantman is a British privateer," quoth he ; "and it's a shame to harbor her in the good port of Boston, amid French-loving people." The consul's words spread like wildfire ; and his suspicions soon passed for facts, without any supporting proof. No one knows who was the writer, or who the printer ; but in a few hours the people upon the streets had thrust into their hands the following handbill :—

THIS NIGHT

Will be performed at the steps bottom of
Long Wharf

A COMEDY

of stripping the

BERMUDIAN PRIVATEER.

CITIZENS. Remember there have been near three hundred of our American vessels taken by these Bermudians, and have received the most barbarous treatment from those **Damn'd PIRATES!!!**

Now, Americans, if you feel the spirit of resentment or revenge kindling in your hearts, let us be united in the cause.

This was enough to rouse the turbulent people of Boston to action. They well remembered the winter's night, twenty-two years before, when their harbor was the scene of the first protest against the oppression of Great Britain. Then they threw overboard the tea, and spared the ships; this time ship and cargo alike should be destroyed. When night fell, small bodies of men could be seen marching down to the wharfs, through the narrow, crooked streets of the old town. Before eight o'clock Long Wharf was crowded with an angry mob. On the deck of the threatened vessel stood the captain, arguing and pleading with the crowd, and at times pointing to the scarlet flag above his head, and threatening his assailants with the wrath of mighty England. Argument, entreaty, and threats proved unavailing; and the crowd, gaining courage with numbers, rushed upon the vessel, and ordered captain and crew ashore. Leaving the scene, the captain rushed wildly into the city in search of the British consul; and, in his absence, the mob began to search his ship. An active and careful search soon brought to light in an out-of-the-way corner of the hold two swivel-guns, two three-pounders, forty charges of shot, fifteen pounds of powder, and eight muskets. All was piled upon the deck, and pointed out to the captain on his return, amid frantic yells from the enraged populace. He solemnly protested that the ordnance was only intended for purposes of defence against the pirates that infested the Bermudas. But the case was already judged. The people laughed at the captain's declarations; and in a few minutes the "Betsy," a mass of flame, was drifting across the harbor to the Charlestown beach. There she blazed away, while the crowd watched the bonfire from the dock, until the last timbers of the ship fell with a hiss into the black waters, and all was dark again.

Popular sympathy is at best but an unstable sentiment, and so it proved with this unreasoning affection of the American people for France. Firmly the American authorities held to their policy of neutrality, refusing to be influenced in the slightest degree by the popular clamor of the people for an alliance with France. Then the French sympathizers made their fatal error. In the presidential chair of the United States sat Wash-



BURNING OF A BERMUDIAN PRIVATEER.

ington, the hero of the Revolution. Rashly the French minister and his following began an onslaught upon this great and wise man, because of his firm determination to keep the United States neutral. They accused him of being an "aristocrat;" of wishing to found an hereditary monarchy, with himself at the head. No epithet was too vile for them to apply to him: "liar" and "traitor" were terms freely applied to him whom we regard as the veritable founder of our free Republic. Such intemperate and unreasoning malice as this had a very different effect from what was intended by the French sympathizers, or Republicans as the party was then termed. The party supporting the President gained strength and influence, even while the actions of Napoleon and the French Chamber of Deputies were giving American seamen the same grounds of complaint as those which Great Britain had so long forced upon them.

It was during the last year of the administration of Washington, that the French Directory issued secret orders to the commanders of all French men-of-war, directing them to treat neutral vessels in the same manner as they had suffered the English to treat them. The cunning intent of this order is apparent by its wording: "Treat American vessels as they suffer themselves to be treated by the British." What course does that leave open to the Americans, save to resist the British, thereby become involved in a war, and so aid France? But there was one other alternative; and, much to the surprise and chagrin of the French, the Americans adopted it. And the only effect of the diplomatic secret order was to embroil France in a naval war with the United States.

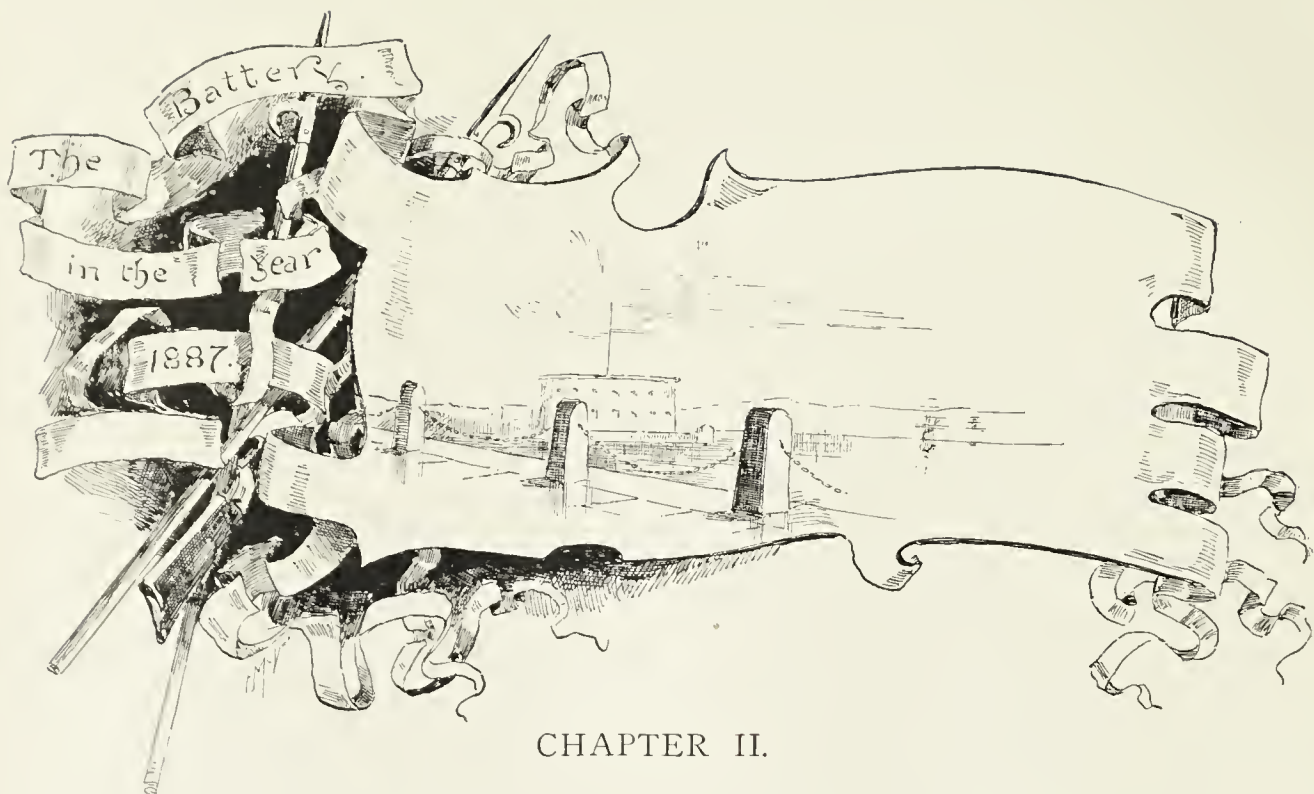
The condition of American commerce, after the promulgation of the French decree, became deplorable indeed. A merchant-vessel flying the American flag was never safe unless under the guns of an American war-vessel; and the reduction of the navy had made these few indeed. Should the brig "Nancy" or "Sarah Jane" put out from the little port of Salem or New London, she was certain to be overhauled by some British frigate, whose boarding officer would pick from the brig's crew a few able sailors, and leave her to make her way short-handed as best she might. Next would come along some French frigate or privateer, — some

“Terreur,” “Incroyable,” or “Insurgente,” — whose astute officers would quickly notice the gaps in the American crew, and, finding out that the brig had been boarded by the English, would declare her a prize for having given aid to the enemies of *la belle France*. Should the little brig be so fortunate as to escape the civilized belligerents, there were still the pirates of Tripoli, the picaroons of the French West Indies, and the unauthorized and irresponsible pirates, who, with forged commissions and flying the Spanish or Portuguese colors, ravaged the seas in all directions. The career of an American merchantman at that time is admirably told by our great novelist Fenimore Cooper in his sea-tale of “Miles Wallingford.” The fate of the good brig “Dawn” was the fate of too many an American vessel in those turbulent times; and the wondrous literary art with which the novelist has expanded the meagre records of the times into an historical novel of surpassing interest makes an acquaintance with the book essential to a proper knowledge of American naval history.

The first act of retaliation on the part of the United States was the embargo ordered by Congress, which prohibited any vessel from leaving American ports. This action had two effects. It quickly brought about great distress in European countries, which even then relied much on the United States for food. This was the chief object of the embargo. The second effect was inevitable. The sudden check upon all foreign commerce plunged business in all parts of the United States into stagnation. Sailors out of work thronged the streets of the seaport towns. Farmers trudged weary miles beside their ox-teams, only to find, when they had hauled their produce to town, that there was no market for it. Along the docks the ships lay idly tugging at their cables, or stranded on the flats as the tide went out. Merchants discharged their clerks, and great warehouses were locked up and deserted. For nearly a year the ports were closed, and commerce thus languished. Then Congress substituted for the embargo the Non-intercourse Act, which simply prohibited commerce with France and England; and again the American flag appeared upon the ocean. But the two warring nations had learned neither wisdom nor justice, and began again their depredations upon the

unoffending Americans. Envoys were sent to France to protest against the outrageous action of that nation ; but they were told that no audience could be granted them, unless they paid into the French treasury two hundred and forty thousand dollars. This last insult was too great. The envoys returned home, told of their treatment, and the war party in the United States rallied to the defence of their nation's honor, shouting Pinckney's noble sentiment, "*Millions for defence, but not one cent for tribute.*"





CHAPTER II.

WAR WITH FRANCE.—THE BUILDING OF A NAVY.—FIRST SUCCESS FOR THE AMERICANS.—
CUTTING OUT THE "SANDWICH."—THE "CONSTELLATION" AND "L'INSURGENTE."—THE
"CONSTELLATION" AND "LA VENGEANCE."

WHILE France and England were waging a desperate and bloody war, the United States was like a shuttlecock, being struck repeatedly by the diplomatic battledores of each nation. Between the British "Orders in Council" and the French "Milan Decree," American commerce was in a fair way of being obliterated. To declare war against both nations, would have been absurd in so young a people; and for months, and even years, the fierce contests of political parties in the United States made a declaration of war against either aggressor impracticable. Now the Franco-maniacs were in the ascendancy, and the country rang with praises of France,—the nation which had cast off aristocrats, and, like America, was devoted to republican principles; the nation which had aided the Colonies in their war for freedom. What though a French privateer did occasionally seize an American ship? The Americans alone were to blame for that; for was

not their attitude toward England, their natural foe, enough to inflame the French? And were not the British aggressions more oppressive than those of France? War there must be, but let it be declared against the hated British.

Such were the sentiments of the French sympathizers, or Democrats as they were then termed in political parlance. But the English sympathizers, or Federalists, held very different opinions. They made no attempt to excuse the offensive attitude assumed by England, but claimed that so soon as her war with France was over she would admit the injustice of her actions, and make due reparation for the injuries she had heaped upon American commerce. But they pointed out that for one vessel taken by England, ten were seized by French privateers, or piratical vessels of nondescript nationality, but bearing French papers. As for France loving republican principles, her republicanism was founded upon blood and the guillotine. She was no longer the nation that had aided the struggling Colonies. She was the nation that had foully murdered the kind king who had lent that aid two decades before. Besides these arguments, the Federalists did not scruple to hint, that, in a second war with England, the United States might lose the independence so recently won, while the navy of France was not so greatly to be dreaded.

Indeed, the American people of that day might well be excused for lethargy in resenting the insults of any first-class naval power. It is not too strong a statement, to say that at this time, when the need was greatest, the United States had no navy. At the close of the Revolution, the navy had been disbanded, the ships sold, and the officers dispersed among the vessels of the merchant marine. This fact alone is enough to account for the depredations of French, English, Portuguese, Tripolitans, and the hordes of pirates without a country. Is there no lesson in this? Does history teach no wisdom to a nation, that we, in the luxuriance of peace after our dreadful civil war, should again allow our navy to fall into decay, until a Yankee blue-jacket is to-day almost as rare a sight in a foreign port as it was in 1794?

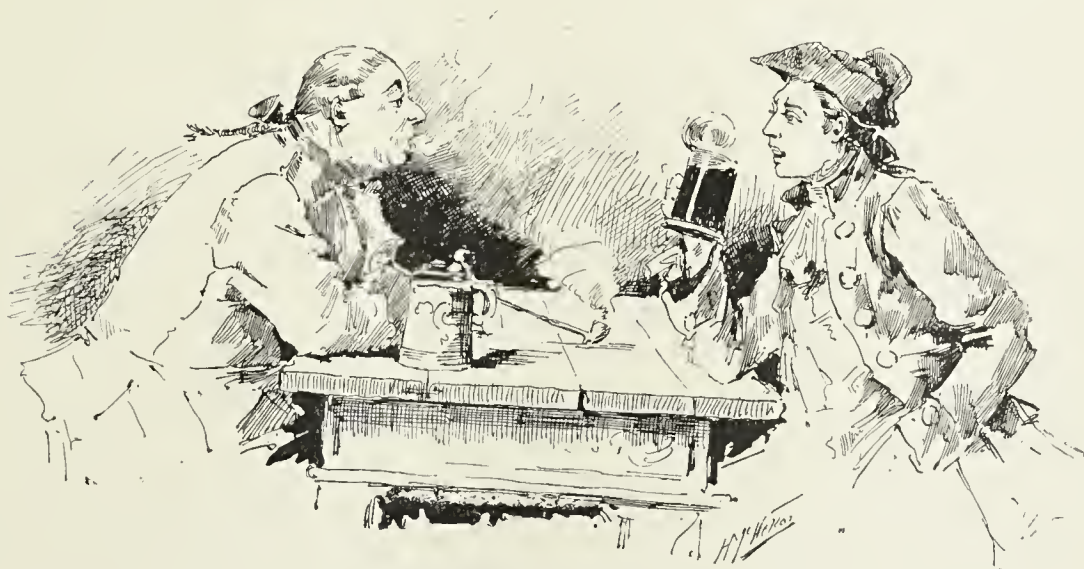
But the depredations of the enemies of American commerce at last

reached such a point that Congress could no longer overlook the necessity for an American navy. In March, 1794, Congress, after listening to a message from the President detailing the depredations of the Algerines, passed an Act authorizing the construction or purchase of six frigates, or an equivalent naval force. This was the beginning of the present United States navy; for some of the frigates built under that law are still afloat, although no longer exposed to the rude shocks of battle or the still more violent onslaughts of the mighty ocean.

In accordance with the law, the frames of six frigates were quickly laid upon the stocks at six different ship-yards; and even while the ribs were yet uncovered, commanders were selected for the unbuilt ships. The names of ships and officers alike are famous in American annals, and may well be mentioned here. The "Constitution," "President," "United States," "Chesapeake," "Constellation," and "Congress" were the vessels begun at this time; and the rolls of no navy of the world ever bore six more famous names. The captains chosen were John Barry, Samuel Nicholson, Silas Talbot, Joshua Barney, Richard Dale, and Thomas Truxton. Of these, all save Truxton had served the Colonies in the Revolution. Barney narrowly escaped being totally disowned by his country, because while holding a commission in the French navy he had once accidentally hoisted the American flag upside down. A cry went up from his enemies, that it was an intentional insult to the country; but his friends, with justice, pleaded that the flag had been wet, and a sailor, running it up to dry, had thus carelessly inverted it.

In the mean time the building of the ships went merrily on, until, when they were nearly finished, a disgraceful treaty was made with Algiers, and work on the new navy was neglected, and three of the unfinished ships sold. But in 1797 the French depredations became so unbearable that work was hastened; and cities and towns, not satisfied with the three frigates provided for, began collecting subscriptions for the purchase of ships, to be presented to the Government. The first of the frigates building by the Government to reach the water was the "United States." As the first vessel built by the United States under

the Constitution, her launch was an event to be celebrated. At noon on the bright May afternoon chosen, the streets of Philadelphia leading to the ship-yard, where the hull of the great frigate lay upon the stocks, were thronged with holiday-making people. The sun had hardly risen, when anxious spectators began to seize upon the best points of observation about the ship-yard. The hour of the launch was set at one P.M.; and for hours before the crowd of watchers sung patriotic songs, cheered for Congress and the new navy, and anxiously debated the chances of



TOASTING THE WOODEN WALLS OF COLUMBIA.

a successful launch. The river was covered with pleasure-craft, decked with flags, and bright with the gay dresses of ladies. The great frigate, too, was a mass of bunting from stem to stern. At one precisely, the blows of many hammers were heard knocking out the blocks; and, after a moment's trembling pause, the first United States frigate glided swiftly into the water, and, after a graceful dip, rode buoyantly on the placid surface of the Delaware.

While the ships were building, the war-feeling against France was steadily growing, and the enthusiasm of the people over the infant navy knew no bounds. Toasts to the "wooden walls of Columbia," and the

“rising navy of America,” were drunk with cheers at stately public banquets, and by bands of jolly roisterers at tap-houses. The patriotic song writer invaded the columns of the newspapers; and, as these could not afford space for all the poetic effusions, they were printed on broadsides, and hawked about the streets. At Harvard College the students made the chapel walls ring with the ode written by Joseph Story:—

“Shall Gallia’s clan our coast invade,
With hellish outrage scourge the main,
Insult our nation’s neutral trade,
And we not dare our rights maintain?
Rise, united Harvard’s band,
Rise, the bulwark of our land.”

Admirable as may be the patriotism of this ode, the poetry is not above criticism; but it is classic in comparison with many others. The following stanza and chorus will show the character of one of the most popular street-songs of the day:—

“Americans, then fly to arms,
And learn the way to use ’em.
If each man fights to ’fend his rights,
The French can’t long abuse ’em.

Yankee Doodle (mind the tune),
Yankee Doodle Dandy;
For the French there’s trouble brewin’:
We’ll spank ’em, hand and handy.”

From Maine to Georgia the mania for writing such doggerel spread with a rapidity only equalled by the avidity with which the people seized upon the songs, and sung them. A complete collection of these remarkable efforts of poetic art would form an amusing volume, and from it alone a history of political movements in the United States might be written. That even such wretched doggerel had its effect upon popular

sentiment, cannot be doubted; for has it not been said, "I care not who makes the laws of a nation, let me but write its songs"?

But the manifestation of the growing ill-feeling towards France was not confined to poor but harmless poetizing. The first open rupture took place at Savannah. In the port of that city were lying two long, rakish schooners flying the French tricolor. Their decks were crowded with men, whose rough actions and brutal countenances showed them to be no respecters of law or order. It did not need the rows of cannon protruding from the ports, nor the carefully covered "long Toms" amidships, to indicate to the good people of Savannah that their harbor sheltered two French privateers. Among the seafaring people of the city, the sight of these two vessels aroused the greatest anger. Were they not representatives of the nation whose ships were seizing and burning American vessels in the West Indies almost daily? Perhaps these very vessels were then fresh from an action with some American ship. Who could tell that the holds of the privateers did not at that very minute contain the best part of the cargo of some captured American vessel? Probably the last shot fired from that "long Tom" had crashed into the side of some little brig flying the stars and stripes, and perhaps ended the career of many an American sailor. From suspicions and conjectures, positive statements soon grew. It was whispered about that the two privateers had recently plundered and burned a Yankee ship returning from the West Indies with a goodly store of specie in exchange for her cargo. Those cut-throat-looking Frenchmen were even then stained with the blood of true Americans. The money they threw on the bars of water-side dram-shops, in exchange for the vile rum which was the worst enemy of too many a good jack-tar, was looked upon with suspicion. "What Yankee's pockets did Johnny Crapaud pick to get all that money?" growled the American sailors.

The Frenchmen were not slow in discovering the dislike manifested by the people of Savannah; and like true soldiers of fortune, as they were, they did nothing to make friends of their enemies. They came ashore in troops instead of singly. Cutlasses hung at their sides. Their

tight leather belts held many a knife or clumsy pistol. Their walk on the street was a reckless swagger; and a listener who could understand French could catch in their loud conversation many a scornful sneer or braggart defiance of the Americans.

Such a state of affairs could not long continue. Each party was ready and waiting to fight, and it was not hard to find an excuse. How the fighting began, no one ever knew; but one night the streets of the little city resounded with cries of rage and groans of agony. Soon crowds began to gather; and sailors rushed up and down the streets, crying that the French desperadoes had killed three Americans. The rage of the populace, and particularly of the seafaring community, had no bounds. "Arm! arm! and take bloody vengeance upon the murderers," was the cry in all quarters. The mob blocked all the roadways leading to the water-front. With cutlasses and guns they attacked the sailors on "L'Agile," which lay at a wharf, and drove them overboard. Once in possession of the ship, the enraged rioters vented their fury by cutting away the masts and rigging, tearing to pieces the woodwork of the cabin, and finally putting the torch to the battered bulk, and sending her drifting helplessly down the river. This summary vengeance did not satisfy their anger. They looked about them for the other vessel, "La Vengeance," and discovered that she had been towed away from the shore, and was being warped up stream to a place of safety. Boats were secured, and the irresistible mob set out in mad pursuit. A militia company, hastily sent to the scene of action by the authorities of the town, failed to check the riot; and, after a futile struggle on the part of her crew, "La Vengeance" shared the fate of her consort. Sympathy for France was well rooted out of Savannah then, and the cry of the city was for war.

Before the news of the uprising at Savannah was known in New England, the navy had struck the first blow against French oppression, and the victory had rested with the sailors of the United States. Congress had at last been aroused to a sense of the situation, and had issued orders to captains of American war-vessels, directing them to capture French cruisers wherever found. A number of large merchant-

vessels and India-men had been armed hastily, and sent out; and at last the country had a navy on the seas. One of the first vessels to get away was the "Delaware," a twenty-gun ship, commanded by Stephen Decatur the elder. Decatur had been out but a few days when a merchantman, the "Alexander Hamilton," was sighted, from the halliards of which a flag of distress was flying. The "Delaware" ran toward the vessel, and sent a boat aboard, which returned, bringing the captain of the distressed craft. To Decatur the captain related the old story of French aggression, which had become so hateful. Only the day before, he said, his ship had been boarded by boats'-crews from a French privateer of twenty guns. The assailants, once on board, had eaten his provisions, and plundered his cargo without scruple. He gave careful directions as to the course of the privateer after leaving the "Alexander Hamilton," and returned to his ship happy in the thought, that, though he could not regain his plundered property, the thieves at least would be punished.

Decatur crowded on all sail, and set off in pursuit of the oppressor. Four hours later, the lookout forward reported four schooners in sight off the bow. For a moment the captain was puzzled, as he had no means of knowing which was the guilty privateer; but, after brief deliberation, he determined to adopt strategy. The rigging of his vessel was slackened, the yards slewed round, and every attempt made to transform the trim man-o'-war into a shiftless merchantman. Then the helmsman was instructed to carefully avoid running near the suspected schooners. The ruse succeeded admirably. The lookouts in the tops of the schooners reported an American merchantman in sight, but making attempts to escape. The cupidity of the Frenchmen was aroused. In the "Delaware" they saw only a defenceless ship, from which, by virtue of their strength, they could take whatever plunder they desired. From the decks of the "Delaware," the sailors could see the Frenchmen shaking out sail after sail; and soon one schooner, a perfect cloud of canvas, took the lead, and left her consorts far in the rear. It was the privateer they were after. The jackies of the "Delaware" clambered into the rigging, and set all sail, with the clumsiness of merchant-sailors; but, though the ship

spread a large expanse of canvas, she was making but little progress, for two long cables dragged in the water astern, holding her back. The Frenchman came up gallantly, but suddenly discovered the ports along the side of the "Delaware," and concluded he had caught a Tartar. It was too late to escape then; for the "Delaware," coming about, had the schooner directly under her guns, and the Frenchman had no course left but to surrender. The privateer proved to be "Le Croyable," of fourteen guns and seventy men. Her captain was vastly astounded to hear that the United States had at last sent out cruisers against the French, who had come to look upon Americans as their legitimate prey. Keeping "Le Croyable" alongside, Decatur ran for Philadelphia, where he was received with unbounded enthusiasm. The captured ship was taken into the United States navy, under the name of the "Retaliation," and sent, under command of Lieut. Bainbridge, to cruise in search of other privateers.

But the career of the "Retaliation" under the American flag was neither long nor glorious. Ill luck seemed to attend the vessel in all her cruises, and Bainbridge wandered up and down the high seas without getting within range of a French cruiser or privateer. In November, 1798, the "Retaliation" was cruising, with two other men-of-war, in the West Indies, not far from Guadaloupe. One day three sails were made out to the eastward, and two more to the westward. Bainbridge thought that at last his opportunity had arrived; and the "Retaliation" set off to reconnoitre the strangers on the eastward, while the two other American ships made after the three sails in the opposite direction. As Bainbridge gained upon his chase, he concluded from their appearance that they were two English ships, and accordingly threw aside all caution, and sailed boldly alongside. Unluckily, they proved to be hostile French cruisers; and, when the discovery was made, the "Retaliation" was well within range. Every sail was set, and the ship put before the wind, to escape from the enemy, but too late. The leading ship of the enemy was a fine frigate; and she rushed through the water after the fugitive, like a dolphin after a flying-fish. Soon a heavy shot from one of the frigate's

bow-chasers came whizzing by the "Retaliation," unpleasantly reminding the Americans that they were still within range, and their adversaries carried heavy metal. The second frigate soon opened fire, and the position of the "Retaliation" became hopeless. Her flag was unwillingly hauled down, and the vessel became again the property of its original owners. It is a strange coincidence, that this ship should have thus been the first prize of both Americans and French in the war.

The Frenchmen were not content with their success in capturing the "Retaliation:" so, while one frigate stopped to secure the prize, the other passed on in hot chase after "The Retaliation's" two former consorts, the "Montezuma" and "Norfolk." Bainbridge was taken aboard the French frigate "Volontaire," which then continued her course in the wake of her consort, the "Insurgente." For the captured American captain on the deck of the "Volontaire," the chase was one of great excitement. He well knew that the two stately French frigates were much more than a match for the flying Americans; and, should they overhaul the chase, the "Montezuma" and the "Norfolk" would join the "Retaliation" in French captivity. Racked with anxiety he paced the deck, trying in vain not to perceive that the pursuers were steadily gaining, and chafing under the position of helplessness in which he found himself. But an opportunity to help did unexpectedly present itself. The French captain, after a long look through his marine-glasses at the flying craft, turned to Bainbridge, and inquired, —

"What may be the force of your consorts, captain?"

Without a moment's hesitation, Bainbridge responded, —

"The ship carries twenty-eight twelve-pounders, and the brig twenty nines."

The Frenchman was astounded, as well he might be; for Bainbridge's answer was a most preposterous falsehood, nearly doubling the actual armament of the two vessels. An eager consultation was immediately held by the officers on the quarter-deck. Bainbridge looked on anxiously, and was delighted with the success of his ruse, when he heard orders for the hoisting of a signal which should call back the frigate

leading in the chase. The signal was hoisted; and the "Insurgente," obeying, abandoned the chase, and returned. Her captain was indignant at his recall, and curious to know the cause of it. When told of Bainbridge's statement, he was furious; for his ship had been close enough to the chase to see that the Americans were small craft, utterly unable to cope with the two pursuing frigates. For his falsehood, Bainbridge was roundly abused, and many a French oath was hurled at his head. His action was indeed inexcusable by the rules of honor; and the utmost that can be said of it by the most patriotic American is, that by his falsehood he saved two good ships for the infant navy of the United States. From a military point of view, however, his conduct was commendable; and in recognition thereof, on his release from captivity, he was made commander of the "Norfolk," one of the vessels he had saved.

France and the United States were now actually at war, although no definite declaration of war had been made by either party. This fact made many French privateers assume an injured air, on being captured by United States ships, and complain that they had never heard of any declaration of war. With a Frenchman of this sort, Stephen Decatur the younger had an experience early in his naval career.

This occurred in February, 1799. The frigate "United States" was cruising near Martinique in that year, and to her young Decatur was attached as a sub-lieutenant. One morning a French privateer was sighted, and the frigate set out in hot pursuit. The privateer took the alarm quickly, and crowded on all sail, until her long, narrow hull slipped through the waves like a fish. The breeze was fresh, and the chase an exciting one; but gradually the immense spread of the frigate's canvas began to tell, and she rapidly overhauled the fugitive. The French captain was plucky, and even desperate, in his attempt to escape; for, seeing that he was about to be overhauled, he resorted to the expedient of a fox chased by hounds, and doubled, turning short to windward, and running right under the guns of the frigate. The move was a bold one, and might well have succeeded, had it not been for the good marksmanship of a gunner on the frigate, who promptly sent a twenty-four-pound



A LESSON TO PRIVATEERS.

shot (the only one fired in the affair) straight through the hull of the privateer, between wind and water. In an instant all was confusion on the French vessel. The water poured into her hold through the hole cut by the shot; and the hasty lowering of her sails, and the frantic howls for succor from the crew, told the people of the "United States" that their chase was at an end. The boats of the frigate were quickly lowered, and Decatur went in one as officer in command. When he reached the sinking ship, he found a scene too ludicrous to be pathetic. Along the rail of the vessel, from bow to stern, the Frenchmen were perched like birds. Many had stripped off all their clothes, in order to be prepared to swim; and from all arose a medley of plaintive cries for help, and curses on that unlucky shot. By skilful management of the boats, all were saved; and it happened that Decatur pulled into his own boat the captain of the sinking vessel.

Brushing the salt water out of his eyes, this worthy expressed great surprise that he had been fired upon by a vessel bearing the United States flag.

"Ees eet that that ees a sheep of les États-Unis?" he inquired, in the broken English that four years of cruising against Americans had enabled him to pick up.

"It is," responded Decatur.

"I am indeed sairprised. I had not thought that les États-Unis had the war with La République Française."

"No, sir," responded Decatur, thoroughly provoked; "but you knew that the French Republic was at war with the United States, that you were taking our merchant-vessels every day, and crowding our countrymen into prison at Basseterre to die like sheep."

This was more than the Frenchman could deny, and he was constrained to accept his capture with the best grace possible.

An audacious, but clearly illegal, exploit of the blue-jackets in this war, was the cutting out and capture of the French letter-of-marque vessel "Sandwich," as she lay in Port Platte, a small harbor on the Spanish side of St. Domingo. Commodore Talbot, who won a reputation

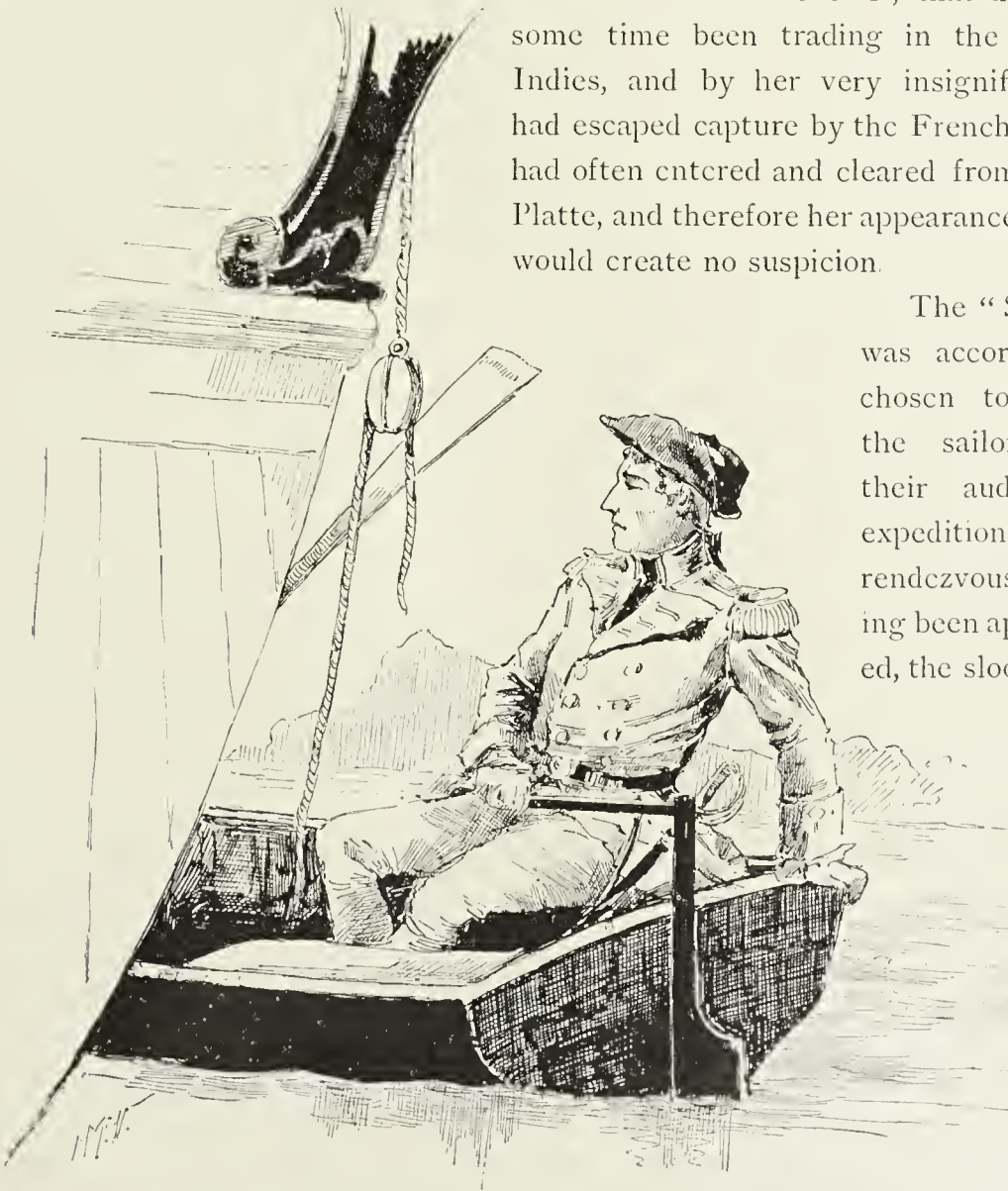
for daring and recklessness in the Revolution, was cruising about on the San Domingo station, and had spent some weeks in monotonous voyaging, without an opportunity to capture a single prize. Word was brought to the squadron, that in the little harbor of Port Platte a vessel was taking in a cargo of coffee. From the description of the vessel, Commodore Talbot recognized her as a former British packet, the "Sandwich," now sailing under French letters of marque. Her known speed and seaworthy qualities made her too valuable a prize to be left in the hands of the enemy; and Talbot, without more ado, determined to capture her. The first difficulty that lay in the way was the fact that the vessel was under the protection of Spain, a neutral power. Talbot was no man to notice so purely formal an obstacle. He growled out a decided negative to all hints about respecting a neutral flag. Spain neutral, indeed! She might claim to be neutral, but her Picaroons were too often to be found among the French pirates to leave any respect for Spain's neutrality in the mind of a man of sense; and the "Sandwich" he was going to take, and on his own responsibility. This silenced all opposition.

Having arrived at the determination to take the "Sandwich," the next problem to be solved was, how shall she be taken? Obviously the first step was to make a careful reconnoissance of the ship and her defences. To Lieut. Hull of the "Constitution," this duty was assigned. One dark and stormy night Mr. Hull took one of the frigate's cutters, and, pulling into the harbor, carefully examined the situation. On his return, he reported that the "Sandwich" was stripped of her rigging, and lay directly under the guns of a small battery, built on shore for her protection. To sail in with the frigate, and capture the enemy by mere force of arms, would have been simple enough; but the object of the Americans was to take the ship without injuring her, in order that she might at once join the United States squadron. Strategy was therefore necessary.

It was accordingly determined to secure an American merchant-vessel, that could enter the port, and run alongside the "Sandwich," without

arousing suspicion. Luckily at that very moment a craft turned up that filled the need precisely. This was the American sloop "Sally," a battered, weather-beaten little craft, that had for some time been trading in the West Indies, and by her very insignificance had escaped capture by the French. She had often entered and cleared from Port Platte, and therefore her appearance there would create no suspicion.

The "Sally" was accordingly chosen to bear the sailors on their audacious expedition. A rendezvous having been appointed, the sloop met



HULL MAKES A RECONNOISSANCE.

the "Constitution" far out at sea; and a large body of blue-jackets and marines left the frigate, and took quarters on the clumsy little

merchantman, which then laid her course for Port Platte. About midnight the lookouts on the "Sally" saw a vessel's lights near at hand; but, beyond reporting to the officer of the deck, they paid no heed to their neighbor. Suddenly, however, out of the darkness came a bright flash; and the hum of a heavy shot in the air above the "Sally" was followed by the dull report of a cannon. At the same time a blue light burned on the deck of the vessel from which the shot proceeded, showed her to be a powerful frigate. Then ensued a few moments of intense suspense for the little band on the "Sally." Should the stranger prove to be a French frigate, all was lost; but in that latitude English vessels were common, and possibly this might be one. Soon the regular thumping of oars in the tholepins, and the splashing of the waves against an approaching boat, could be heard; and in a few minutes a hail came from the black water alongside, and the dark figure of a man standing in the stern-sheets of a boat was seen. A rope was thrown him, by the aid of which he nimbly clambered aboard. An involuntary murmur of relief arose from the party on the "Sally," as by the dim light of the lanterns they saw that the officer wore a British uniform. The officer himself could not repress a start and exclamation of surprise as he saw a band of officers in naval uniform, and a large body of blue-jackets and marines, on the vessel which he expected to find manned by a half-dozen lanky Yankees, commanded by a down-east "skipper."

"Why, what ship's this?" he exclaimed in surprise, as he looked upon the armed men about him. Lieut. Hull, who was in command, explained to him the situation, and told him of the adventure that was being attempted. The officer seemed much disappointed, and told Mr. Hull that the British frigate was standing about outside the harbor, to capture the "Sandwich" as she came out; but the idea of so boldly setting at naught the principles of neutrality had not occurred to them. After a few minutes' conversation, the visitor returned to his ship, and the "Sally" proceeded on her errand. She reached the entrance to the harbor of Port Platte in the morning, and sailed boldly in. Most of the crew and the marines were hidden beneath the bulwarks, or sent

below; so that the people on the "Sandwich" gave but a glance to the approaching vessel, until she ran so close to their vessel's bows that they feared an accident.

"Look out there, or you'll run foul of us!" shouted a mate from the deck of the "Sandwich; and, as if his cry was a signal, the helm of the "Sally" was put down, the vessel ranged up alongside, and in an instant a torrent of armed men poured over the sides of the surprised Frenchman, and drove the crew below. There was no resistance. The ship was captured in five minutes. The marines of the expedition had been sent ashore to spike the guns of the battery, and their work was performed with equal promptitude. Then all hands set to work rigging the captured vessel, and getting her ready for sea. On the shore the people were in the greatest excitement, beating drums, parading the few militia, and threatening dire revenge in the name of outraged Spain. But the captors of the vessel paid but little attention to their enemies; and by sunset the "Sandwich," with all sails set, left the harbor, and joined the United States squadron.

The news of this achievement, lawless as it was, evoked great enthusiasm in the United States. A nation's conscience is elastic; and the people praised the heroes of the "Sandwich" episode, much as sixty-five years later they commended the commander of the "Wachusett" for running down and capturing the Confederate ship "Florida," which was relying upon the protection of a neutral port in Brazil. Yet in 1814, when two British frigates attacked and captured the "Essex" in the harbor of Rio Janeiro, the good people of the United States were loud in their denunciations of the treachery of a commander who would so abuse the protection of a neutral nation. Such inconsistencies are only too common in the history of nations. In the end, however, the affair of the "Sandwich" terminated disastrously for the bold adventurers; for the protests of Spain were too forcible to be disregarded, and the prize-money of all concerned in the exploit was confiscated to pay the damages awarded the injured party.

Not all the successes of the United States navy in the war with

France were, like those we have related, dependent upon the speed rather than the fighting qualities of our ships. Not many months had passed, when two representative ships of the warring nations met, and tried conclusions at the mouths of their cannon. It was on the 9th of February that the "Constellation," one of the new American frigates, was cruising on her station in the West Indies, when her lookout reported a large ship some miles to leeward. The frigate at once ran down upon the stranger, which hoisted American colors. Among ships of the same navy it is customary to have private signals of recognition; and Commodore Truxton, who commanded the "Constellation," set his signal, and awaited the answer. But no answer came; and the stranger, evidently considering further disguise impossible, boldly set French colors, and fired a gun to windward by way of a challenge.

On the "Constellation" the challenge aroused universal enthusiasm. For the first time since the Revolution, the gallant defenders of the stars and stripes were to have an opportunity to try their strength with a hostile man-of-war. The enemy seemed no less ready for the conflict, and waited gallantly for the "Constellation" to come down to closer quarters. From both ships came the roll of the drums and the shrill pipings of the *bo's'n's* whistle, as the men were called to quarters. Then all became still, and the two frigates bore down upon each other. Neither antagonist was hasty about opening fire, and the report of the first gun came from the Yankee when she had come into point-blank range. Then began the thunderous broadsides, that soon enveloped the hulls of the two ships in dense gray smoke; so that, to an observer at a little distance, all that could be seen of the fight was the tapering masts and yard-arms, above the smoke, crowded with sailors repairing damages, and nimble young midshipmen shrilly ordering about the grizzled seamen, and now and again taking a crack at the enemy with pistol or musket, by way of recreation. In the foretop of the "Constellation" was stationed young David Porter, who in that trying moment showed the result of his hard schooling in the merchant-service, of which we have spoken. By the rapid fire of the enemy, the foretopmast was badly cut,

and there was great danger that it might go by the board. Porter hailed the deck several times for instructions, but, finding that his voice could not be heard above the roar of battle, determined to act upon his own responsibility, and accordingly cut away the sails, lowered the yards, and, by relieving the injured spar of all strain, prevented its falling. In the mean time the battle raged fiercely below. The American frigate was more powerful in her armament, and better handled, than the Frenchman. Her guns were handled with deliberation, and the aim of the gunners was sure and deadly; while the shot from the enemy went hurtling through the rigging of the "Constellation," doing but little damage. The decks of the Frenchman were covered with dead and wounded, and at last two raking broadsides from the American frigate ended the conflict. When the vanquished ship was boarded, she proved to be the "Insurgente," the same frigate that had captured the "Retaliation" some months before. Her loss in this engagement amounted to twenty-nine killed and forty-one wounded, while the cock-pit of the "Constellation" was tenanted by but three wounded men; and but one American had lost his life, he having been killed by an officer, for cowardice. Both ships were badly cut up in the engagement.

The news of this victory was received with great rejoicing in the United States, and was celebrated with cannon-firing and the ringing of bells. At Boston, the fourth Sunday in March was set for a day of general rejoicing; and on that day huge crowds gathered in State Street, and after salutes had been fired, and the city's bells pealed, the people, at a given signal, joined in three mighty cheers, that fairly shook the surrounding houses, for Truxton, the "Constellation," the blue-jackets, and the success of the wooden walls of America.

Even after the "Insurgente" had struck her flag, the tars of the "Constellation" found they had an elephant on their hands. The work of transferring the prisoners was begun, and actively prosecuted; but, when night fell, there were still nearly two hundred Frenchmen on the prize. The wind was rising fast, and the long rollers of the Atlantic were being lashed into foaming breakers by the rising gale. It was hazardous for

the two vessels to continue near each other; and Lieutenant Rodgers, with Midshipman Porter and eleven men, was detailed to take charge of the prize, and bring her into port. When the officers boarded the prize, they found that they had indeed a desperate undertaking before them. It was difficult enough for thirteen men to handle the great ship, without having to keep in subjection one hundred and seventy-three captives. To add to the danger, the gratings had been thrown overboard, and there was no way of confining the captives in the hold. A careful search for handcuffs resulted only in failure. But Rodgers was a man of decision, and Porter, though but a boy, was bold and determined; and between them they solved the problem. The prisoners were ordered below; and a sentinel was placed at each hatchway, with orders to shoot the first man who should attempt to come on deck. Howitzers loaded with grape were trained upon the hatchway, for use in case of an organized movement of the prisoners. For three days the officers sustained this fearful strain, without a moment's sleep; but their labors were finally crowned by successfully bringing the ship and prisoners into St. Kitts.

In the second pitched battle of the war, the "Constellation" was again the American combatant; but this time, though the fight was a glorious one, it did not terminate so fortunately for the American ship. It was on the 1st of February, 1800, that the gallant frigate, under the same commander, was cruising about her old hunting-grounds, near Guadaloupe. A sail was sighted, which, after a careful examination through his marine-glass, Commodore Truxton pronounced to be an English merchantman. As an invitation to the stranger to approach, English colors were hoisted on the "Constellation," but had only the effect of causing the stranger to sheer off; for she was, indeed, a French war-vessel. Perplexed by the actions of the mysterious ship, the "Constellation" gave chase, and soon came near enough to see that she had caught a Tartar; for the vessel was the French frigate "La Vengeance," mounting fifty-two guns. Although a more powerful vessel than the American, she continued her flight; while the gallant Truxton, caring nothing for the odds against him, kept on in hot pursuit. All the remainder of that day, and until noon of the next,



A MIDNIGHT BATTLE.

the chase continued, with but little change in the position of the ships. "A stern chase is a long chase," thought the jackies on the "Constellation;" but they were not discouraged, and only crowded on the more sail. On the afternoon of the second day, the American began to gain rapidly; and by eight at night the two ships were within speaking distance of each other. Truxton mounted the rail, and shouted through a speaking-trumpet, "What ship is that?" The only answer was a shot from the stern-port of the Frenchman, and the fight was opened.

It was then growing dark, though the faint glow of the long tropic twilight still lingered on the western horizon. Above the towering masts of the two great frigates, the stars gleamed with a brilliancy seldom seen in more northern latitudes. As the ships rushed through the water, the waves broke against the bows, and fell back in masses of phosphorescent light; while the wakes of the vessels could be traced far back into the darkness,—two parallel paths of light, that glowed and sparkled like the milky way that spanned the starry sky above.

Side by side the two frigates ploughed through the water. The creaking of their cordage, and the rushing of the wind through the rigging, mingled with the thunder of the cannonade, which, though slow, and made up of single reports, when the "Constellation" was confined to the use of her bow-chasers, soon rose to thunderous broadsides as the two ships came side to side. As the twilight died away, the two contestants were enveloped in almost total darkness, save for the fitful flashes of the cannon, and the red glare of the battle-lanterns that hung from the shrouds. The gunners had for a target nothing but a black, shapeless mass, that could be seen rushing through the waves some hundreds of yards away. But this did not prevent fearful execution being done on both sides. For five hours the two ships kept up the running fight. The ponderous eighteen and forty-two pound shot of the enemy crashed into the "Constellation," or swept her decks, doing dreadful damage. The deck was strewn with dead and dying men, and the surgeons down in the cock-pit soon had their tables full of moaning sufferers. No one could tell what might be the condition of "La Vengeance;" but her regular

fire told that she was in no wise disabled. At one o'clock in the morning, the sound of her guns seemed to be more distant; and by the flash of the cannon it was seen that she was drawing out of the fight. The Americans cheered lustily, and Truxton ordered that his ship be braced up in chase.

But the fire of the enemy had been rapid and well directed; and now, at this critical moment, its results were to rob the "Constellation" of her victory. As the ships were brought about, to follow in the track of the flying "Vengeance," an officer came rushing to the quarter-deck, and reported that all the shrouds and braces of the foremast had been shot away, and the mast was in momentary danger of falling. The rigging had been so literally cut in pieces by the fire of the enemy, that splicing was out of the question; but Truxton, in the hope of saving his mast, called all hands from the guns, and the fire of the "Constellation" stopped.

Up in the foretop was stationed Midshipman Jarvis, with a dozen or more of jackies, whose duty it was to mend the cordage of the topmast, and to keep up a musketry fire upon the enemy. Long before the officer of the deck had reported the danger of the foremast, one of the topmen had told Jarvis, who was but a lad, that the mast was likely to fall.

"Ay, ay, my lad," responded the plucky young officer; "but our place is here, and we must go with it."

The sailors on the deck below worked manfully: but, notwithstanding all their efforts, the mast soon went by the board; and Jarvis and his brave comrades were thrown far out into the black water, never to be seen again.

The fall of the foremast ended the battle for the "Constellation." Helpless, and cumbered by the wreck, she tossed about on the water, while her foe made good her escape. What might have been the outcome of the conflict, had it continued, it is impossible to tell. "La Vengeance" carried heavier metal and a larger crew than the American frigate; and Truxton, with all his dash, found no mean adversary in Capt. Pitot. Yet the condition of the French ship when she came into port at Curaçoa

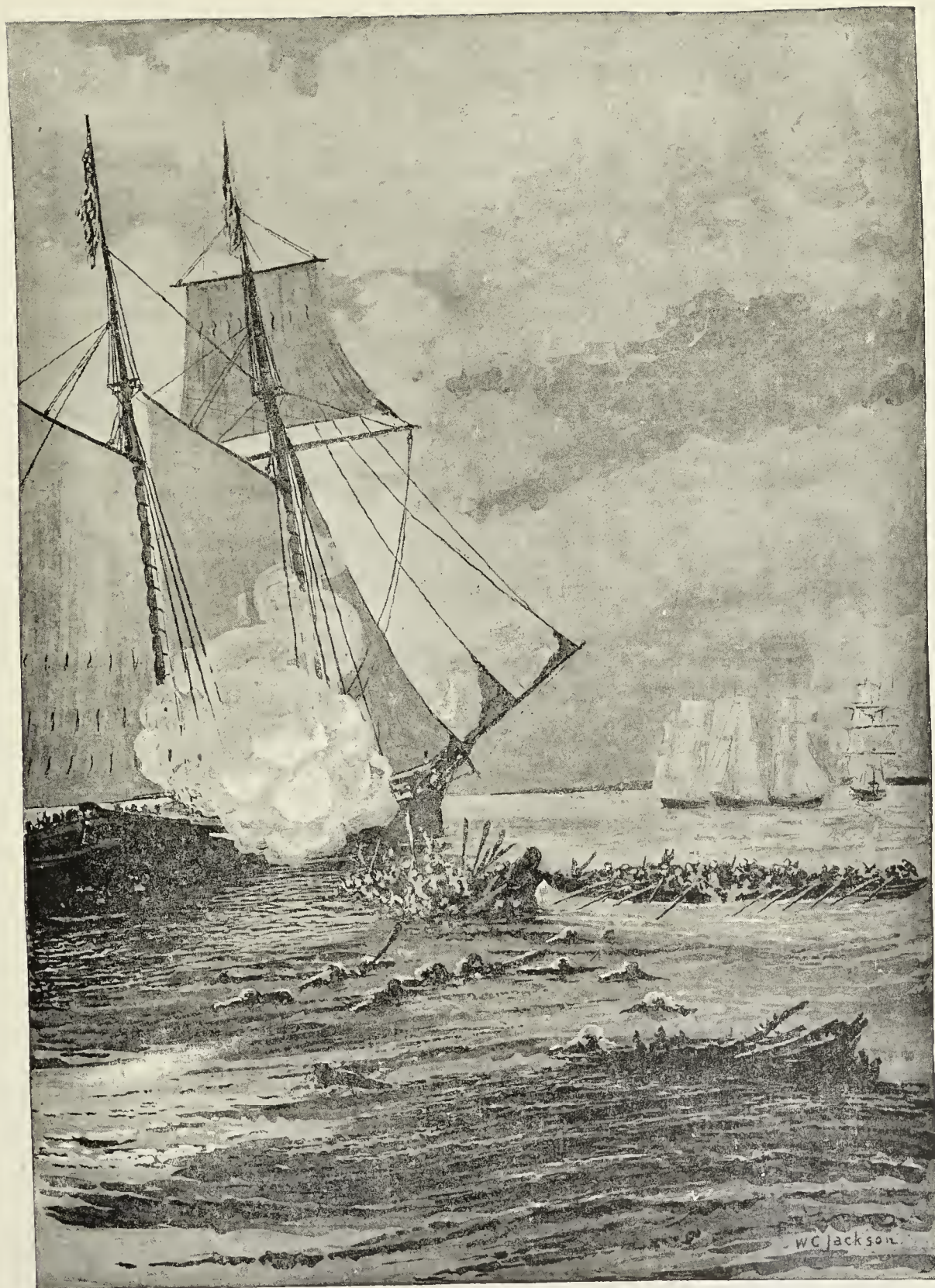
showed that the fire of the Yankee gunners had been rapid and accurate. Fifty of the enemy were killed, and one hundred and ten wounded; while, of the Americans, only thirty-nine appeared on the lists of killed and wounded. It was said at the time, that Capt. Pitot reported having struck his flag three times; hoisting it again, on finding that in the darkness the "Constellation" took no notice of the surrender. But this seems, on the face of it, improbable; and the action can hardly be awarded to either ship, although the gallantry shown on either side was enough to win a victory.

It may well be imagined that this brilliant action, together with the capture of "L'Insurgente," made the "Constellation" the most popular ship of the navy; a place which she held until the stirring events of the war with England pushed the "Constitution" so far to the front, that even now, when she lies dismantled and rotting at the Brooklyn navy-yard, Americans still think of "Old Ironsides" as the typical ship of our once glorious navy.

The actions between the "Constellation" and the "Vengeance" and "Insurgente" were the chief contests between regularly commissioned ships of the two nations in the war with France. But the West Indies were filled with privateers and semi-piratical craft, with which the navy waged a ceaseless warfare, which well prepared the blue-jackets for the graver struggle which was yet to come with Great Britain. The half-savage population of the French islands was a fruitful source of trouble to the American seaman. These gentry, known as Picaroons, seemed to have a natural inclination for piracy; and the unlucky merchant-captain who should come to anchor, or be becalmed, near one of the islands, was sure to see his vessel boarded, and his cargo plundered, by a lawless horde of Frenchmen and mulattoes, whose dialect was an unmusical combination of French and African tongues. The custom of the Picaroons was to do their cruising in huge barges propelled by sweeps. With these they would often cut out a merchant-vessel from beneath the guns of a protecting man-of-war, and tow her off to be plundered at leisure. Occasionally, however, their well-laid plans failed in the execution.

One of the most noted of these occasions was the repulse of ten Picaroon barges that attacked the United States topsail schooner "Experiment," and a fleet of merchantmen under her charge. The "Experiment," with her convoy, was lying becalmed in the Bight of Leogane, in the island of San Domingo. Not a breath of air was stirring; and the vessels, drifting about at the mercy of the currents, soon became widely separated, and were an easy prey for the hordes of Picaroons that swarmed in that region. In no way could the "Experiment" secure a position which would enable her to protect all the merchantmen. In this dilemma it was determined to disguise the war-vessel, in the hopes that the pirates, taking her for a merchantman, would attack her first. This was done; and, as luck would have it, the Picaroons fell into the trap.

Although not the captain of the ship, Licut. David Porter was in command on this occasion; and, on hearing that ten Picaroon barges with swivels in the bows, and crews of forty men each, were approaching, he sent his crew to quarters, and prepared for a desperate resistance. Onward over the smooth waters came the huge barges, each with its twenty-six oars, looking like a mighty centipede. On the ship every thing was quiet, as the jackies stood to their guns, with the prospect of a deadly struggle before them. Should the barges get to close quarters, and surround the schooner, no earthly power could prevent their boarding, when their numbers would surely bring them success. But the painful pause before the battle was not long. Suddenly Porter, ever on the alert, cried out to fire. From every gun that could be brought to bear, a storm of grape and canister was rained upon the advancing boats; and the yells that went up from the astounded Picaroons told of the deadly work done in the crowded boats. For a moment, the fleet of barges fell into confusion; some retreating, some advancing, and others drifting about helpless. Although the murderous fire was kept up, the pirates formed again, and attempted to get alongside, but were repeatedly beaten back. With musketry and swivels they attempted to answer the fire of the Americans; but with little effect, for the crew of the "Experiment" kept close under the bulwarks. Men were precious then, and Porter



THE FIGHT WITH THE PICAROONS.

would not let one expose himself unnecessarily ; but he himself, from his prominent post of observation, was an easy mark, and a Picaroon's bullet soon lodged in his shoulder. Notwithstanding the painful wound, he never left his post. The unexpected opposition only maddened the Picaroons, and they made desperate attempts to get alongside ; but to no avail. Now the stern and now the bow of the "Experiment" was chosen as the point of attack ; but still the rapid fire of the jackies beat the pirates back.

On the low-lying shores of the islands, some hundreds more of the Picaroons had gathered to watch the conflict ; and, as the boats became short-handed from the carnage, they put back to the shore, and returned to the fight fully re-enforced. The bodies of the dead were thrown overboard without ceremony, and soon attracted great schools of the fierce sharks that abound in the waters of the tropics. Then a new horror was added to the scene. At a moment when the barges wavered and floated for a moment without motion, Porter ordered his gunners to load with solid shot. Two or three broadsides rang out ; and, when the smoke cleared away, two barges were seen to be sinking. The affrighted crews bent to their oars, and strained every muscle to reach the shore ; but, while yet in deep water, the barges sunk, and the Picaroons were left floundering in the sea. All struck out manfully for the shore ; but suddenly one sprung half from the water, and with a horrid yell sunk from sight. One after another disappeared in the same way ; for the sharks had tasted blood, and were not to be appeased. For seven hours the conflict raged fiercely ; but at last the Picaroons confessed themselves beaten, and sullenly relinquished their attacks upon the "Experiment." But they were not to be wholly robbed of their plunder ; and two merchant-vessels fell a prey to their piratical violence, before a breeze, springing up, enabled the squadron to escape.

Before the year was over, the Picaroons had another serious defeat to mourn over ; and on this second occasion they were well punished for their many piracies. The "Boston," a twenty-eight-gun ship, was conveying a merchant-brig to Port au Prince, when the lookout discovered

nine large barges skulking along the shore, ready to pounce upon the two vessels when a favorable moment should arrive. Porter was again in command. His tactics were at once determined upon; and the ports of the "Boston" were closed, and the ship thoroughly disguised. The Picaroons were deceived sufficiently to make a dash upon the two ships, and approach boldly within easy gun-shot; then, discovering their mistake, they turned and fled in panic. This time no calm hampered the ship-of-war; and, making all sail, she dashed into their midst. For two hours she kept within easy range of the barges; and her gunners, working deliberately, did fearful execution in the ranks of the enemy, and sunk three barges before the wretched fugitives could reach the shore. After dealing out this summary justice, the "Boston" continued her voyage, and, after leaving her convoy in the port of her destination, began a cruise about the islands and the Spanish Main. In the course of this cruise she met the French corvette "Le Berceau," which struck after a plucky action of two hours. The Frenchman was badly cut up in hull and rigging, and shortly after the surrender her fore and main masts went by the board. The "Boston" was but little injured, and took her prize safely into port.

After this the fighting was chiefly confined to short, sharp affrays between the smaller United States ships and the French privateers, which were generally good sailers and well manned, although deficient in metal. The great frigates like the "Constellation" found no more adversaries worthy of their fighting qualities, and only the sloops and topsail-schooners gave their crews a chance to smell gunpowder. Some of these smaller actions, however, were sharp and gallant, although their details have not been preserved like those of the famous naval duels.

The "Experiment," after her adventure with the Picaroons, fought two gallant battles, and was successful in each, although the second for a time threatened to lead to international difficulties. While cruising on her station, the vessel made two sail, which, as they came nearer, proved to be a brig of eighteen guns and a three-masted schooner of twenty guns, both flying the French tricolor, and both intent on mischief. The American fled, but laid her course in such a way as to separate the two

pursuers. When night had fallen, Lieut.-Commander Stewart, who commanded the "Experiment," saw that the enemy's forces were divided by about a league of green water, and at once determined to strike a blow. Doubling on his course, he ran his vessel alongside the schooner, and poured in two or three broadsides with such rapidity and haste that the Frenchman struck before his consort could come to his aid. Hastily throwing Lieut. Porter and a prize-crew aboard the prize, Stewart dashed off after the brig, which fled incontinently, and proved too good a sailer to be overtaken. Pure audacity had carried the day for the "Experiment," for the brig was powerful enough to have blown her pursuer to bits in a short engagement.

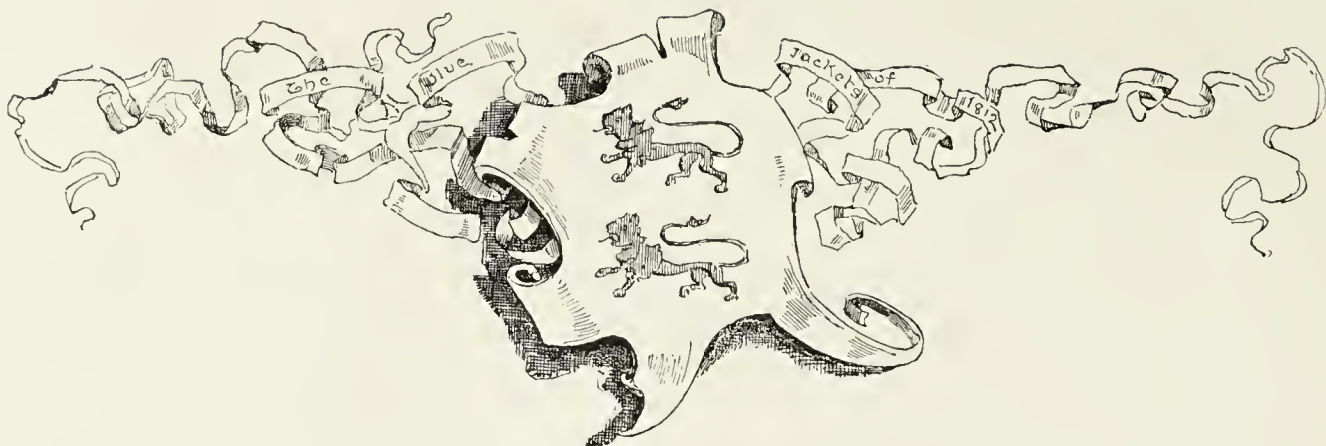
The second exploit of the "Experiment" was no less gallant than this, but in the end proved far less satisfactory. Late in a summer's afternoon a suspicious sail was made; and the chase, begun at once, had continued until nightfall. When darkness settled over the ocean, Stewart calculated the course laid by the stranger, and ordered his helmsman to keep the ship on that course until midnight, when, if the fugitive was not overhauled, the chase would be abandoned. Just before midnight a sail was seen near by and to windward. The men were sent to quarters; and with guns shotted, and battle-lanterns burning, the "Experiment" ran up under the stranger's lee, and hailed. No answer was returned. Perplexed and irritated, Stewart ordered a shot fired into the stranger, which was no sooner done than a broadside was returned, which made the schooner reel. Both vessels were then plunged into conflict, though neither knew the name or nationality of the opponent. For a time the "Experiment" was handicapped by the heavy wind, which laid her over so far that her guns were elevated skyward, and her shot whistled through the enemy's tops. To obviate this, planks were thrust under the breeches of the guns, until at last the proper range was secured, when an active cannonade soon forced the stranger to strike. Lieut. Porter was sent to take possession of the prize; but the report he brought back put all thought of prize-money out of the minds of the victors, for the stranger was a Bermudian privateer, flying the British flag, and under the protec-

tion of a nation with which the United States was at peace. The fault lay with the privateers for not responding to the hail, but the Americans did all in their power to repair the damage done. All the next day they lay by their vanquished adversary, and the sailors of two ships worked side by side in patching up the injuries done by the shot. By night the privateer was able to continue her cruise, resolving, doubtless, to avoid future conflicts with the ships of the American navy.

But to enter into the details of each of the naval duels of the French war of 1798, would require a volume devoted exclusively to its consideration. Although there was never a declaration of war between the two countries, yet the warfare on the ocean was earnest, and even desperate. Both nations went to work with a will, and the results were of incalculable benefit to the then pygmy navy of the United States. In their newspapers the Americans read with wonder and pride of the successes of their new vessels and young sailors, against the trained seamen and best frigates of France. When the war closed, the country rang with the praises of the blue-jackets. Indeed, a record of sixty-four French vessels captured, besides many American vessels which were recaptured from their captors, was enough to arouse feelings of pride throughout the nation; and the celerity with which France seized upon the proposal for peace showed well the reputation which our navy had gained beyond the ocean. For months after the peace was signed, the names of Bainbridge, Truxton, Stewart, and Talbot were household words throughout the nation; and the deeds of the gallant ships along the Spanish Main were the favorite stories of the boys of the land. Three of the oaken veterans, however, never came home; but against their names must be put the saddest of all naval records: foundered at sea. The captured "Insurgente," the "Saratoga," and the "Pickering" simply vanished from the ocean. Over fourscore years have passed; and of them, and the gallant lads that manned them, nothing has ever been known. Whether they perished by the fury of the tropical typhoon, whether a midnight collision sent them suddenly to the bottom, or whether the ships were destroyed and the crews murdered by the piratical desperadoes of the

West Indies, can never be known. Somewhere on the coral-strewn bed of the blue seas of the tropics lie the mouldering hulks of those good ships, and the bones of their gallant crews. There will they lie, unknown and unsought, until earthly warfare is over for all men, and the sea gives up its dead.





CHAPTER III.

PROPOSED REDUCTION OF THE NAVY.—RENEWAL OF BRITISH OUTRAGES.—THE AFFAIR OF THE "BALTIMORE."—ATTACK ON THE "LEANDER."—ENCOUNTER BETWEEN THE "CHESAPEAKE" AND "LEOPARD."



NOT many months had elapsed after the close of the war between the United States and France, when the pride of the nation in the navy that had won such laurels in that conflict began to wane. In the place of poems and editorials singing the praises and pointing out the value of the navy, the newspapers began to be filled with demands for its reduction. It was an unwarrantable expense, exclaimed the critics of the press, for a nation so young, and so far from the warring peoples of Europe, to maintain a navy at all. A few gunboats to guard the coast would be enough. All the consequences of the reduction of the navy at the close of the Revolution were forgotten in an instant. A penny-wise and pound-foolish spirit came over all the political leaders; and the Democratic party, then newly come into power, determined to endear itself to the hearts of the people by cutting down the expenses of the Government,* and to this end they attacked first the appropriations for the navy. A gallant fight was made against the total abolition of the navy; and finally it was decided to retain thirteen of the ships-of-war on the list, while the others should be sold.

With these thirteen vessels, of which the most noted were the "Constitution," the "Constellation," and the "United States," the navy was placed upon a peace footing. Even this moderate squadron, however, brought out much opposition from economically minded statesmen; but the aggressions of the Barbary pirates, and the war with Tripoli which opened in 1801, gave the sailor lads active employment, and for the time the outcry of the economists against the navy ceased.

Of the various wars with Tripoli and the other states of Barbary, nothing will be said in this volume. The political bearing of the Tripolitan war upon the war which afterwards followed with Great Britain was slight; but, as discipline for the sterner reality of naval warfare with the nation long reputed to be "mistress of the seas," the experience of the Yankce tars with the turbaned infidels was invaluable.

Let us, then, return to the shameful recountal of the injuries committed by the British upon the American flag on the high seas. Even while the United States was at war with France, and thus aiding the British, the outrages never ceased. American sailors were still impressed. American vessels were boarded, and often seized, on the slightest pretexts. Even the ships of the Government were not exempt, for the British respected no right save that of greater power.

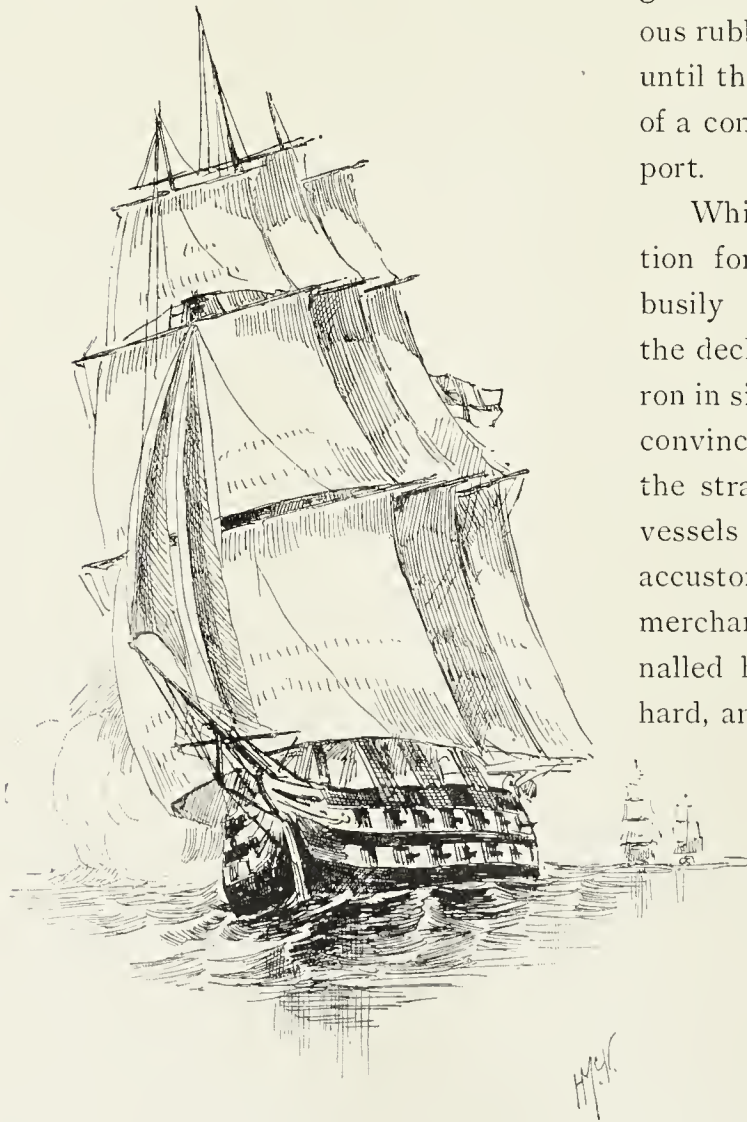
It was in November, 1798, that the United States sloop-of-war "Baltimore," of twenty guns, and under command of Capt. Phillips, was in charge of a convoy of merchantmen bound to Havana. On the morning of the 16th of that month, the sloop, with her convoy, were in sight of their destination, and could even see the solid, towering walls of the Moro, rising high above the low-lying shores about Havana. The breeze was fresh and fair; and all hands expected to cast anchor before night in the beautiful bay, on the shores of which stands the chief city of the island of fruits and spices. On the "Baltimore" the jackies were busily at work holystoning the decks, until they glistened with the milky whiteness dear to the eye of the sailor of the days before the era of yellow pine or black, unsightly iron ships. The shrouds and standing rigging had been pulled taut with many a "Yo, heave ho!" until the wind

hummed plaintively through the taut cordage, as through the resounding strings of an Æolian harp. The brasswork and polished breeches of the

guns were polished by the vigorous rubbing by muscular sailors, until they shone again. All told of a coming season in a friendly port.

While the work of preparation for port was thus going busily on, the lookout hailed the deck, and reported a squadron in sight. A moment's glance convinced Capt. Phillips that the strangers were British war-vessels; and, as they were still accustomed to annoy American merchantmen, he hastily signalled his convoy to carry sail hard, and make port before the British came up, while the "Baltimore" bore up to speak to the British commodore.

Before the merchantmen could escape, however, the British cut off three of them, under some peculiar and mistaken



THE BRITISH SQUADRON.

ideas of the law of blockades. More than this, when Capt. Phillips paid his visit to the English commodore in the latter's cabin, he was calmly informed that it was intended to take from the "Baltimore" into the British service every sailor who had not a regular American protection; this under

the new English doctrine, that every sailor was an Englishman unless proved to be otherwise. The avowal by the British captain of this intention filled Phillips with indignation, and he warmly protested against any such action. It would, he insisted, be an outrage on the dignity of the nation which he served; and, as the overpowering force of the British rendered resistance impossible, he should insist upon surrendering his ship should they persist in their undertaking, which was no more nor less than open warfare. With this he arose from his seat, and leaving the cabin, to which he had been invited as the guest of a friendly nation, returned to his own ship.

Here he found a state of affairs that still further added to his indignation. At the foot of the gangway of the "Baltimore" floated a boat from one of the British ships, and on the deck of the sloop was a lieutenant in British uniform in the act of mustering the American crew. Capt. Phillips at once seized the muster-roll, and ordered the officious Briton to walk to leeward, while the crew of the "Baltimore" were sent to their quarters.

But, having done this, he became doubtful as to the course for him to pursue. Successful resistance was out of the question; for he was surrounded by five British vessels, one of which carried ninety-eight guns, while the smallest mounted thirty-two, or twelve more than the "Baltimore." Even had the odds against him been less great, Capt. Phillips felt grave doubts as to his authority to resist any armed vessel. He had sailed under instructions that "the vessels of every other nation (France excepted) are on no account to be molested; and I wish particularly to impress upon your mind," wrote the Secretary of the Navy, "that should you ever see an American vessel captured by the armed ship of any nation at war, with whom we are at peace, you cannot lawfully interfere, for it is to be taken for granted that such nation will compensate for such capture, if it should prove to have been illegally made." After some deliberation over this clause in his instructions, Capt. Phillips concluded that for him to make even a formal resistance would be illegal; and accordingly the flag of the "Baltimore" was low-

ered, and the British were told that the ship was at their disposal. They immediately seized upon fifty-five men from the American crew, who were taken away to the British fleet. But in this wholesale impressment they did not persist. Fifty of the men were sent back; and the squadron set sail, carrying away the five pressed men, and leaving the men of the "Baltimore," from the captain down to the smallest cabin-boy, smarting under the sense of an indignity and insult offered to the flag under which they served.

Capt. Phillips hoisted his flag again, and continued his cruise. News travelled slowly in those days; and the tidings of this latest British insult did not reach the United States until the "Baltimore," returning home, brought it herself. Hardly had the ship reached port, when Capt. Phillips hastened to Philadelphia, then the national capital, and laid his report of the affair before the Government. In a week's time, without even the formality of a trial, he was dismissed from the navy.

After the lapse of more than eighty years it is impossible to look back upon this affair without indignation, mortification, and regret. That the naval officers of Great Britain should have been able, by the mere force of arms, to inflict so cruel an insult upon our flag, can but arouse indignation in the breast of every true American. And the humiliation was great enough, without having added to it the obviously hasty and unjust action of the authorities, in dismissing, without a trial, an officer who had faithfully served his country. It is indeed possible that Capt. Phillips erred gravely in his course; but justice alone demanded for him a fair trial, and the nature of his instructions certainly afforded him some justification for his action.

The years that opened the nineteenth century were full of events that exerted the greatest influence over the growth of the United States. The continuance of the Napoleonic wars in Europe, our own war with the Barbary powers, the acquisition of Louisiana, — all these had their effect on the growth of the young Republic of the West. But, at the same time, England was continuing her policy of oppression. Her cruisers and privateers swarmed upon the ocean; and impressment of seamen and seizure

of vessels became so common, that in 1806 memorials and petitions from seamen and merchants of the seaport towns poured in upon Congress, begging that body to take some action to save American commerce from total destruction. Congress directed the American minister in London to protest ; but to no avail. Even while the correspondence on the subject was being carried on, the British gave renewed evidence of their hostility to their former Colonies, and their scorn for the military or naval power of the United States. From the far-off shores of the Mediterranean came the news that boats from the fleet of the British Admiral Collingwood had boarded the United States gunboat No. 7, and taken from her three sailors, under the pretence that they were Englishmen. But an occurrence that shortly followed, nearer home, threw this affair into oblivion, and still further inflamed the national hatred of the English.

A small coasting sloop, one of hundreds that made voyages along the American coast from Portland to Savannah, was running past Sandy Hook into New York Bay, when she was hailed by the British ship "Leander," and ordered to heave to. The captain of the coaster paid no attention to the order, and continued on his way, until a shot from the cruiser crashed into the sloop, and took off the head of the captain, John Pearce of New York. This was murder, and the action of the British in firing upon the sloop was gross piracy. Such an outrage, occurring so near the chief city of the United States, aroused a storm of indignation. The merchants of New York held meetings at the old Tontine Coffee-House, and denounced not only the action of the British cruiser, but even impeached the Government of the United States ; declaring that an administration which suffered foreign armed ships to "impress, wound, and murder citizens was not entitled to the confidence of a brave and free people." The fact that the captain of the offending cruiser, on being brought to trial in England, was honorably acquitted, did not tend to soothe the irritation of the Americans.

Occurrences such as this kept alive the American dislike for the English, and a year later an event happened which even the most ardent peace-lover could not but condemn and resent with spirit.

In 1807 the United States frigate "Chesapeake," then lying at the navy-yard at Washington, was put in commission, and ordered to the Mediterranean, to relieve the "Constitution." Nearly a month was consumed in making necessary repairs to hull and cordage, taking in stores, shipping a crew, and attending to the thousand and one details of preparation for sea that a long time out of commission makes necessary to a man-of-war. While the preparations for service were actively proceeding, the British minister informed the naval authorities that three deserters from His British Majesty's ship "Melampus" had joined the crew of the "Chesapeake;" and it was requested that they should be given up. The request was made with due courtesy; and, although there is no principle of international law which directs the surrender of deserters, yet the United States, as a friendly nation, was inclined to grant the request, and an inquiry was made into the case. The facts elicited put the surrender of the men out of the question; for though they frankly confessed to have deserted from the "Melampus," yet they claimed to have been impressed into the British service, and proved conclusively that they were free Americans. This was reported to the British minister; and, as he made no further protests, it was assumed that he was satisfied.

Some weeks later the vessel left the navy-yard, and dropped down the river to Hampton Roads. Even with the long period occupied in preparation for sea, the armament of the ship was far from being in order; a fact first discovered as she passed Mount Vernon, as she was unable to fire the salute with which at that time all passing war-vessels did honor to the tomb of Washington. After some days' stay at Hampton Roads, during which time additional guns and stores were taken on, and the crew increased to three hundred and seventy-five men, the ship got under way, and started on her voyage.

It was on a breezy morning of June that the "Chesapeake" left the broad harbor of Hampton Roads, the scene of so many of our naval glories. From the masthead of the frigate floated the broad pennant of Commodore Barron, who went out in command of the ship. The decks were littered with ropes, lumber, and stores, which had arrived too late

to be properly stowed away. Some confusion is but natural on a ship starting on a cruise which may continue for years, but the condition of the "Chesapeake" was beyond all excuse; a fact for which the fitting-out officers, not her commander, were responsible.

As the American ship passed out into the open ocean, there was a great stir on the decks of four English cruisers that lay quietly at anchor in Lynn Haven Bay; and almost immediately one of these vessels hoisted her anchor, set her sails, and started out in the track of the frigate. A stiff head-wind blowing, the American was forced to tack frequently, in order to get ahead; and her officers noticed that the British ship (the "Leopard," of fifty guns) tacked at the same time, and was evidently following doggedly in the wake of the "Chesapeake." No suspicion that the pursuer had other than peaceful motives in view entered the minds of the American officers; and the ship kept on her course, while the sailors set about putting the decks in order, and getting the vessel in trim for her long voyage. While all hands were thus busily engaged, the "Leopard" bore down rapidly, and soon hailed, saying that she had a despatch for Commodore Barron. The "Chesapeake" accordingly hove to, and waited for a boat to be sent aboard.

The two ships now lay broadside to broadside, and only about a half pistol-shot apart. No idea that the Englishman had any hostile designs seems to have occurred to Commodore Barron; but some of the younger officers noticed that the ports of the "Leopard" were triced up, and the tompons taken out of the muzzles of the cannon. The latter fact was of the gravest import, and should have been reported at once to the commander; but it appears that this was not done.

In a few moments a boat put off from the "Leopard," and pulled to the American ship, where an officer stood waiting at the gangway, and conducted the visitor to Barron's cabin. Here the English lieutenant produced an order, signed by the British Admiral Berkeley, commanding all British ships to watch for the "Chesapeake," and search her for deserters. Commodore Barron immediately responded, that the "Chesapeake" harbored no deserters, and he could not permit his crew to be mustered by

the officer of any foreign power. Hardly had this response been made, when a signal from the "Leopard" recalled the boarding officer to his ship.

The officers of the "Chesapeake" were now fully aroused to the dangers of the situation, and began the attempt to get the ship in readiness for action. Commodore Barron, coming out of his cabin for the first time, was forcibly struck by the air of preparation for action presented by the "Leopard." Capt. Gordon, the second in command, was ordered to hasten the work on the gun-deck, and call the crew to quarters. The drummers began to beat the call to quarters, but hasty orders soon stopped them; and the men went to their places quietly, hoping that the threatening attitude of the "Leopard" was mere bravado.

The most painful suspense was felt by all on board the American ship. The attitude of the "Leopard" left little doubt of her hostile intentions, while a glance about the decks of the "Chesapeake" told how little fitted she was to enter into action. Her crew was a new one, never exercised at the guns, and had been mustered to quarters only three times. On the gun-deck lay great piles of cumbrous cables, from the coiling of which the men had been summoned by the call to quarters. On the after-deck were piles of furniture, trunks, and some temporary pantries. What little semblance of order there was, was due to the efforts of one of the lieutenants, who, suspecting trouble when the "Leopard" first came up, had made great exertions toward getting the ship clear. While the captain stood looking ruefully at the confusion, still more serious troubles were reported. The guns were loaded; but no rammers, powder-flasks, matches, wads, or gun-locks could be found. While search was being made for these necessary articles, a hail came from the "Leopard." Commodore Barron shouted back that he did not understand.

"Commodore Barron must be aware that the orders of the vice-admiral must be obeyed," came the hail again.

Barron again responded that he did not understand. After one or two repetitions, the British determined to waste no more time in talking; and a single shot fired from the bow of the "Leopard" was quickly followed by a full broadside. The heavy shot crashed into the sides of



THE CHESAPEAKE AND THE LEOPARD.

the "Chesapeake," wounding many of the men, and adding to the confusion on the gun-deck. No answer came from the American frigate; for, though the guns were loaded, there was no way of firing them. Matches, locks, or loggerheads were nowhere to be found. Mad with rage at the helpless condition in which they found themselves, the officers made every effort to fire at least one volley. Pokers were heated red-hot in the galley-fire, and carried hastily to the guns, but cooled too rapidly in the rush across the deck. In the mean time, the "Leopard," none too chivalric to take advantage of an unresisting foe, had chosen her position, and was pouring in a deliberate fire. For nearly eighteen minutes the fire was continued, when the flag of the "Chesapeake" was hauled down. Just as it came fluttering from the masthead, Lieut. Allen, crying, "I'll have one shot at those rascals, anyhow," ran to the galley, picked up a live coal in his fingers, and carried it, regardless of the pain, to the nearest gun, which was successfully discharged. This was the only shot that the "Chesapeake" fired during the affair, — battle it cannot be called.

A boat with two British lieutenants and several midshipmen on board speedily boarded the "Chesapeake," and the demand for the deserters was renewed. Four seamen were seized, and borne away in triumph; but the British commander refused to receive the ship as a prize, and even went so far as to express his regret at the loss of life, and proffer his aid in repairing the damages. Both sympathy and assistance were indignantly rejected; and the disgraced ship went sullenly back to Norfolk, bearing a sorely mortified body of officers and seamen. Of the four kidnapped sailors, it may be stated here, that one was hanged, and the other three forced to enter the British service, in which one died. His comrades, five years later, were restored to the deck of the ship from which they had been taken.

The news of this event spread like wildfire over the country, and caused rage and resentment wherever it was known. Cities, towns, and villages called for revenge. The President issued a proclamation, complaining of the habitual insolence of British cruisers, and ordering all

such vessels to leave American waters forthwith. As in the reduced state of the navy it was impossible to enforce this order, he forbade all citizens of the United States to give aid to, or have any intercourse



LIEUT. ALLEN FIRES A SHOT.

with, any such vessels or their crews. War measures were taken both by the Federal and State Governments. As usual, the popular wrath was vented upon the least culpable of the people responsible for the condition of the "Chesapeake." Commodore Barron was tried by court-martial, and sentenced to five years' suspension from the service, without pay. The cool judgment of later years perceives the unjustness of this sentence,

but its execution cast a deep shadow over the remainder of the unhappy officer's life.

For some years after this episode, little occurred to change the relations of the two nations. The war spirit grew slowly, and was kept alive by the occasional reports of impressments, or the seizure of American ships by British privateers. The navy held its place amid the national defences, although a plan devised by President Jefferson came near putting an end to the old organization. This plan provided for the construction of great numbers of small gunboats, which should be stationed along the coast, to be called out only in case of attack by an armed enemy. A contemporary writer, describing the beauties of this system, wrote, "Whenever danger shall menace any harbor, or any foreign ship shall insult us, somebody is to inform the governor, and the governor is to desire the marshal to call upon the captains of militia to call upon the drummers to beat to arms, and call the militia men together, from whom are to be *drafted* (not impressed) a sufficient number to go on board the gunboats, and drive the hostile stranger away, unless during this long ceremonial he should have taken himself off." Fortunately the gunboat system did not work the total extinction of the old navy.

In 1811 the British aggressions began again, and the situation became more and more warlike. So bold had the privateers become, that they captured a richly laden vessel within thirty miles of New York. Shortly after, the British frigate "Guerriere" stopped an American brig eighteen miles from New York, and took from her a young sailor. The sea was running very rough, and a stiff breeze blowing, when the "Spitfire" was halted by the frigate; but the American captain went with the captured lad to the war-vessel, and assured the commander that he had known the young man as a native of Maine from his boyhood. The reply was, "All that may be so; but he has no protection, and that is enough for me." With these memories fresh, it is not surprising that Americans rejoiced when the news of an encounter terminating in favor of the United States ship was received.

On May 7, 1811, the United States frigate "President" was lying

quietly at anchor off Fort Severn, Annapolis. Every thing betokened a state of perfect peace. The muzzles of the great guns were stopped by tompions. The ports were down. In the rigging of the vessel hung garments drying in the sun. At the side floated half a dozen boats. Many of the crew were ashore on leave. The sailing-master was at Baltimore, and the chaplain and purser were at Washington. From the masthead floated the broad pennant of Commodore Rodgers, but he was with his family at Havre de Grace; and the executive officer, Capt. Ludlow, was dining on the sloop-of-war "Argus," lying near at hand. But the captain's dinner was destined to be interrupted that bright May afternoon; for in the midst of the repast a midshipman entered, and reported that the commodore's gig was coming up rapidly, with Rodgers himself on board. The dinner party was hastily broken up, and the captain returned to his ship to receive his superior officer. On his arrival, Commodore Rodgers said that he had received orders to chase the frigate that had impressed the sailor from the "Spitfire," and insist upon the man's being liberated, if he could prove his citizenship. This was good news for every man on the frigate. At last, then, the United States was going to protect its sailors.

Three days were spent in getting the crew together and preparing for sea; then the stately frigate, with all sails set and colors flying, weighed anchor, and stood down the Chesapeake with the intention of cruising near New York. She had been out on the open ocean only a day, when the lookout, from his perch in the crosstrees, reported a strange sail on the horizon. The two vessels approached each other rapidly; and, as the stranger drew near, Rodgers saw, by the squareness of her yards and the general trim, symmetrical cut of her sails, that she was a war-vessel. Perhaps she may be the offender, thought he, and watched eagerly her approach.

As the stranger came up, the "President" set her broad pennant and ensign; on seeing which the stranger hoisted several signal flags, the significance of which was not understood by the Americans. Finding her signals unanswered, the stranger wore ship, and bore away to the south-

ward, hotly followed by the "President." During all these manœuvres, Rodgers's suspicion of the strange vessel had increased; and her apparent flight only convinced him the more of the hostile character of the stranger. It was a stern chase and a long one, for at the outset the stranger was hull down on the horizon. After an hour it became evident that the "President" was gaining, for the hull of the fugitive was plainly seen. The breeze then died away, so that night had fallen over the waters before the ships were within hailing distance.

A little after eight in the evening the "President" was within a hundred yards of the chase, which could be seen, a dark mass with bright lights shining through the rows of open ports, rushing through the water directly ahead. Rodgers sprang upon the taffrail, and putting a speaking-trumpet to his lips, shouted, "What ship is that?" A dead silence followed. Those on the "President" listened intently for the answer; but no sound was heard save the sigh of the wind through the cordage, the creaking of the spars, and the rush of the water alongside. Rodgers hailed again; and, before the sound of his words had died away, a quick flash of fire leaped from the stern-ports of the chase, and a shot whizzed through the rigging of the "President," doing some slight damage. Rodgers sprang to the deck to order a shot in return; but, before he could do so, a too eager gunner pulled the lanyard of his piece in the second division of the "President's" battery. The enemy promptly answered with three guns, and then let fly a whole broadside, with discharges of musketry from the deck and the tops. This exhausted Rodgers's patience. "Equally determined," said he afterwards, "not to be the aggressor, or to suffer the flag of my country to be insulted with impunity, I gave a general order to fire." This time there was no defect in the ordnance or the gunnery of the American ship. The thunderous broadsides rang out at regular intervals, and the aim of the gunners was deliberate and deadly. It was too dark to see what effect the fire was having on the enemy, but in five minutes her responses began to come slowly and feebly. Unwilling to continue his attack on a ship evidently much his inferior in size and armament,

Rodgers ordered the gunners to cease firing ; but this had hardly been done when the stranger opened again. A second time the guns of the



COMMODORE RODGERS HAILS.

“President” were run out, and again they began their cannonade. The stranger was soon silenced again ; and Commodore Rodgers hailed, that

he might learn the name of his adversary. In answer came a voice from the other vessel, —

“We are his Majesty’s ship ——.” A gust of wind carried away the name, and Rodgers was still in doubt as to whom he had been fighting. Hoisting a number of bright lights in her rigging, that the stranger might know her whereabouts, the “President” stood off and on during the night, ready to give aid to the disabled ship in case of need.

At early dawn every officer was on deck, anxious to learn the fate of their foe of the night before. Far in the distance they could see a ship, whose broken cordage and evident disorder showed her to have been the other party to the fight. A boat from the “President” visited the stranger, to learn her name and to proffer aid in repairing the damages received in the action. The ship proved to be the British sloop-of-war “Little Belt;” and her captain stated that she was much damaged in her masts, sails, rigging, and hull, and had been cut several times between wind and water. He declined the proffered aid, however, and sailed away to Halifax, the nearest British naval station. Commodore Rodgers took the “President” to the nearest American port.

When the “President” reached home, and the news of her exploit became known, the exultation of the people was great, and their commendations of Rodgers loud. “At last,” they cried, “we have taught England a lesson. The insult to the ‘Chesapeake’ is now avenged.” Rodgers protested that he had been forced unwillingly into the combat, but his admirers insisted that he had left port with the intention of humbling the pride of some British ship. Indeed, the letter of an officer on the “President,” printed in “The New York Herald” at the time, rather supported this theory. “By the officers who came from Washington,” wrote this gentleman, “we learn that we are sent in pursuit of a British frigate, who had impressed a passenger from a coaster. Yesterday, while beating down the bay, we spoke a brig coming up, who informed us that she saw the British frigate the day before off the very place where we now are; but she is not now in sight. We have made the most complete preparations for battle. Every one wishes it. She is exactly our

force; but we have the "Argus" with us, which none of us are pleased with, as we wish a fair trial of courage and skill. Should we see her, I have not the least doubt of an engagement. The commodore will demand the person impressed; the demand will doubtless be refused, and the battle will instantly commence. . . . The commodore has called in the boatswain, gunner, and carpenter, informed them of all circumstances, and asked if they were ready for action. Ready, was the reply of each."

No consequences beyond an intensifying of the war spirit in America followed this rencounter. Before dismissing the subject, however, it is but fair to state that the account as given here is in substance Commodore Rodgers's version of the matter. The British captain's report was quite different. He insisted that the "President" fired the first shot, that the action continued nearly an hour, that it was his hail to which no attention was paid, and finally he intimated that the "President" had rather the worse of the encounter. The last statement is easily disproved, for the "President" was almost unscathed, and the only injury to her people was the slight wounding of a boy, in the hand. On the "Little Belt," thirty-one were killed or wounded. The other points led to a simple question of veracity between the two officers. Each government naturally accepted the report of its officer; and, so far as the governments were concerned, the matter soon passed into oblivion.

Not long after this episode, a somewhat similar occurrence took place, but was happily attended with no such serious consequences. The frigate "United States," cruising under the broad pennant of Commodore Decatur, fell in with two British ships near New York. While the commanders of the vessels were amicably hailing, a gun was suddenly fired from the battery of the "United States," owing to the carelessness of a gunner in handling the lanyard. It was a critical moment, for the British would have been justified in responding to the fire with broadsides. Happily, they were cool and discreet, and Decatur made such explanations as showed that no attack or insult was intended. This little incident is interesting, as showing the distrust of the British which led

an American captain to keep his guns primed and cocked, while conversing with English men-of-war.

Another incident showed that the hatred of the British service that prevailed among seamen was a matter of deep-seated conviction. While the United States ship "Essex" was lying in an English port, it became known that one of her crew was a deserter from the British navy, and his surrender was immediately demanded. Although the man stoutly protested that he was an American, yet no proof could be shown; and, as the ship was in British waters, it was determined to surrender him. A British officer and squad of marines boarded the "Essex" and waited on the deck while the sailor went below to get his kit. Bitterly complaining of the hardness of his fate, the poor fellow went along the gun-decks until he passed the carpenter's bench. His eye fell upon an axe; and after a minute's hesitation he stepped to the bench, seized the axe in his right hand, and with one blow cut off the left. Carrying the severed member in his hand, he again sought the deck and presented himself, maimed, bleeding, and forever useless as a sailor, to the British officer. Astonished and horrified, that worthy left the ship, and the wounded man was sent to the sick-bay. The incident was a forcible commentary on the state of the British service at that time, and left a deep impression on the minds of all beholders.

In the next contest over deserters, however, the Americans rather secured the best of the argument. The "Constitution" was lying at anchor in Portsmouth roads, when one of the crew slily slipped overboard and swam down with the tide to the British ship "Madagascar" that lay at anchor near by. When he had reached the Englishman, he was too exhausted to speak; and the officers, supposing that he had fallen overboard accidentally, sent word to the "Constitution" that her man had been saved, and awaited the orders of his commander. The next morning a boat was sent down to the "Madagascar" to fetch the man back; but, to the astonishment of the visiting officer, he was told that the sailor claimed to be a British subject and wished to escape from the American service.

"Have you any evidence," asked the American officer of the British admiral, "beyond the man's own word, that he is an Englishman?"

"None whatever, sir," was the response, "but we are obliged to take his declaration to that effect."

The American officer returned to his ship, vowing vengeance on the harborers of the deserter. His opportunity came that very night.

In the dead watches of the night, when all was still on deck save the monotonous tramp of the sentries, there suddenly rang out on the still air the sharp crack of a musket. The officer of the deck rushed to see what was the matter, and was shown a dark object floating near the ship, at which a sentry had fired. A boat was lowered and soon came back, bringing in it a sailor who had deserted from the "Madagascar," and reached the "Constitution" by swimming. Capt. Hull asked the fellow his nationality.

"Sure, O'im a 'Merricun, your honor," he answered in a rich brogue that would have branded him as a Paddy in any part of the world. With a twinkle in his eye, Hull sent the Irishman below, and told the sailors to take good care of him.

Early in the morning, a boat came from the "Madagascar;" and a trim young lieutenant, clambering aboard the American frigate, politely requested that the deserter be given up. With great dignity, Capt. Hull responded that the man was a citizen of the United States, and should have protection. The visiting officer fairly gasped for breath. "An American!" he exclaimed. "Why, the man has never been out of Ireland except on a British man-of-war."

"Indeed!" responded Hull blandly. "But we have his statement that he is an American, and we are obliged to take his declaration to that effect." And the man was never given up.

During the day, two British frigates cast anchor so near the "Constitution" that Capt. Hull suspected them of hostile intentions, and moved his ship to a new anchorage. A frigate followed closely in her wake. At eight in the evening, Capt. Hull determined to meet the show of force with force. The drums beat, and the men were called to quar-

ters. The battle-lanterns were lighted fore and aft. The tops were crowded with sailors, armed with short carbines, to pick off the men on the enemy's decks. Along the gun-deck stood the men at the guns; and an officer, describing the scene, says they took hold of the ropes as if they were about to jerk the guns through the ship's sides. All were enthusiastic over the prospect of the coming action.

"Now, then, my lads," said an officer to a group of sailors, "if a fight comes of this, it will be in the cause of you sailors; and I expect you to fight like men."

"Ay, ay, sir," was the response. "Let the quarter-deck look out for the colors, and we'll keep the guns going."

All the preparations for battle were made openly, and the attitude taken by the "Constitution" was an open challenge. No notice of it was taken by the British ship; and, after maintaining her hostile attitude for some time, the "Constitution" hoisted her anchor, and left the harbor.

The time of the formal declaration of war was now rapidly approaching. The long diplomatic correspondence between the two nations had failed to lead to any amicable solution of the difficulties that were fast urging them to war. Great Britain still adhered to her doctrine that a man once an Englishman was always an English subject. No action of his own could absolve him from allegiance to the flag under which he was born. Upon the trade of the United States with France, the English looked with much the sentiments with which, during our civil war, we regarded the thriving trade driven with the Confederacy by the British blockade-runners. Upon these two theories rested the hateful "right of search" and the custom of impressment.

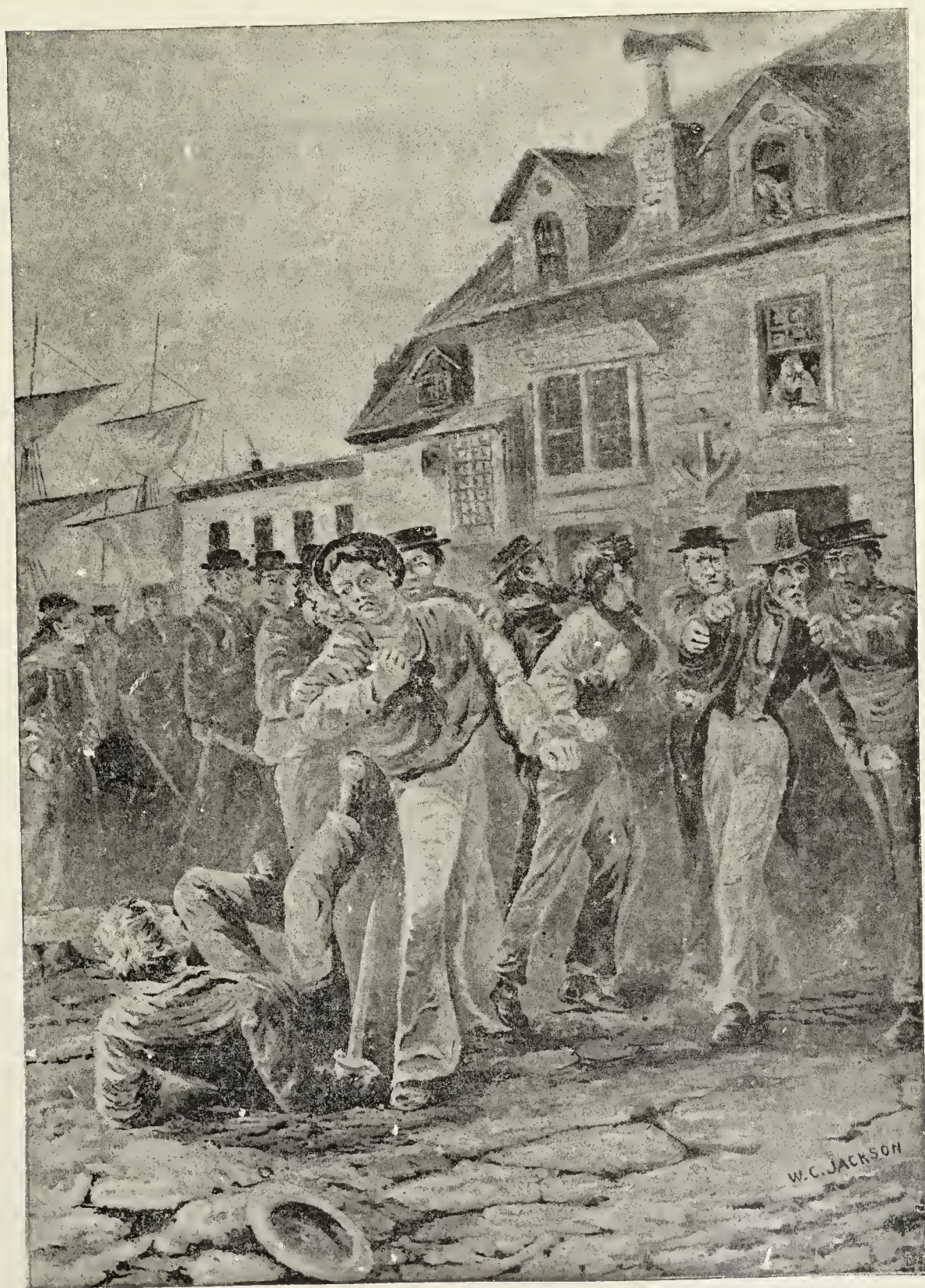
It is needless to say that the views of the United States on these questions were exactly contrary to those of the English. Such vital differences could, then, only be settled by war; and war was accordingly declared in June, 1812. It was a bold step for the young nation, but there was enough of plausibility in the English claims to make it evident that they could never be set aside by diplomacy; and so, with hardly a

thought of the odds against her, the United States dashed in to win justice at the muzzles of her cannon.

That the odds were tremendous, is not to be denied. Of the military strength of the two nations, it is not the purpose of this book to treat. Indeed, a recountal of the land battles of the war of 1812 would hardly be pleasant reading for Americans. It was on the sea that our laurels were chiefly won. Yet, at the time of the declaration of war, the navy of the United States consisted of twenty vessels, of which the largest carried forty-four guns, and the majority rated under thirty. For years this navy had been a butt of ridicule for all the European naval powers. The frigate "Constitution" was scornfully termed by an English newspaper "a bunch of pine boards sailing under a bit of striped bunting." Not long after the publication of this insolent jeer, the "Constitution" sailed into an American port with a captured British frigate in tow. Right merrily then did the Americans boast of their "bunch of pine boards."

This miniature navy of the United States was about to be pitted against the greatest naval power of the world. The rolls of the navy of Great Britain bore at this time the names of over one thousand ships. Of these, no less than two hundred and fifty-four were ships-of-the-line, mounting over seventy-four guns each. Behind this great navy were the memories of long years of conquests, of an almost undisputed supremacy upon the ocean. Small wonder was it, then, that the British laughed at the idea of the Americans giving battle to their hitherto unconquered ships.

What, then, was the secret of the success which, as we shall see, attended the American arms on the sea? The answer is, that men, not ships, carried the day. Yet Great Britain had the more sailors on her muster-rolls. True, but they were only too often unwilling slaves. Instead of enlisting, like free men, they were hunted down like brutes and forced to enter the service. No sailor was safe from the press-gang, and even sober citizens were often kidnapped to serve the 'King' on the ocean. From the ships of other nations, from their homes and from taverns, the unlucky sailors were dragged away. Even in the streets of populous



THE PRESS GANG.

cities, they were not safe; and it was no uncommon sight to see pitched battles being fought between the press-gangs and sailors whom they were trying to capture. Generally, the inhabitants and landmen sided with the victims; and a sailor running through the streets of the town would be given every assistance by people, who filled with obstacles the path of his pursuers. Could he reach the water-side, the fugitive would find every boat at his service; while his pursuers, on coming up, found every water-man very busy and very gruff. But the wonder is, that, with this unjust and repulsive system of impressments, the British sailors were so loyal, and fought with the dogged courage that they invariably showed.

In the American navy, on the contrary, the enlistments were voluntary. The service was popular, and the seamen entered it without the feeling of outraged liberty inspired by the British system. Officers were readily obtained from the ranks of the adventurous American navigators. Officers and men alike often brought into the service personal memories of British oppression; and this, with their free and independent spirit, enabled them to wage an unequal war with glorious results for the supporters of the stars and stripes.





CHAPTER IV.

THE WAR ON THE OCEAN.—COMMODORE RODGERS'S CRUISE.—THE LOSS OF THE "NAUTILUS."—FIRST SUCCESS FOR THE BRITISH.—THE ESCAPE OF THE "CONSTITUTION."—THE "ESSEX" TAKES THE "ALERT."—THE "CONSTITUTION AND THE "GUERRIERE."



AT the time when the declaration of war was made public, a small squadron of United States vessels was lying in the port of New York, under the command of Commodore Rodgers. The warlike tendency of the popular mind had long been evident, and the captain of every war-vessel had been for some time making active preparations for service. Some apprehension was felt in naval circles, lest the small size of the navy should lead the authorities to lay up the vessels in port during the continuance of the war. This apprehension was well founded; for not only had such a course been debated in the cabinet, but orders had been prepared, directing Commodore Rodgers to hold his vessels in port. This decision was actively opposed

by the officers of the navy, who felt that, though inconsiderable in numbers, the United States navy could make a brave fight for the honor of the nation; and with one accord all protested against the action contemplated. Two officers, Capt. Bainbridge and Capt. Stewart, went to Washington and sought an interview with the Secretary of the Navy, Paul Hamilton, who assured them that the plans of the Government were well matured and would not be changed. The United States could not afford, said the secretary, that its few frigates and men-of-war should be snapped up by the enormous fleets of the British, as would surely be the case, if they ventured upon the ocean. But it was not intended to materially reduce the lists of naval officers. The frigates, with all their loose spars and top-hamper taken down, were to be anchored at the entrances of the principal harbors of the country, and operated as stationary batteries.

This prospect was far from agreeable to the two officers. It was intolerable for them to imagine the graceful frigates, with towering masts and snowy canvas, reduced to mere shapeless hulks, and left to guard the entrance of a placid harbor. Finding the secretary inexorable, they went to the President and put the case before him. They assured him, that, small though the list of American ships was, it bore the names of vessels able to cope with any thing of their class in the British navy. Both officers and seamen were proud of the service, and burned to strike a blow for its honor. President Madison seemed much impressed by their representations, and agreed to take the matter into consideration; and, if it seemed wise, to change the plan. But, before any definite action was taken by him, war was declared.

Within an hour after he had received news of the declaration of war, Commodore Rodgers had his squadron under way, and dropped down New York Bay to the ocean. Under his command were the flag-ship "President" of forty-four guns, the "Essex" thirty-two, and the "Hornet" eighteen. In the lower bay these vessels were joined by the "United States" forty-four, the "Congress" thirty-eight, and the "Argus" sixteen. On June 21, 1812, three days after the declaration of war, the whole squadron passed Sandy Hook, and stood out into the ocean.

It is probable that the remarkable celerity of Commodore Rodgers's departure was due, in part, to the fear that the authorities would revive the obnoxious order laying up the ships in port. His chief object, however, was to overhaul a large fleet of British merchantmen that had recently left the West Indies, and, according to all calculations, should have been in the vicinity of New York at that time. All sail was accordingly crowded upon the ships, and the squadron set out in hot pursuit.

For two days the monotony of the horizon was broken by no sail; but on the third a ship was espied in the distance, which was made out to be an enemy's frigate, after which chase was made by the whole squadron. A fresh breeze was blowing, and both chase and pursuers were running free before the wind. As sail after sail was crowded upon the ships, the smaller vessels, with their lesser expanse of canvas, began to fall behind; and in a few hours the frigate "President" had gradually drawn away from the fleet, and was rapidly gaining on the enemy. The sail had been spied at six o'clock in the morning, and at four P.M. the flag-ship had come within gunshot of the chase. The wind then fell; and the chase, being long out of port and light, began to gain on her heavier adversary. Both vessels now began to prepare for a little gunnery. On the English vessel, which proved to be the "Belvidera," thirty-six, the sailors were busily engaged in shifting long eighteens and carronades to the stern, making a battery of stern-chasers mounting four guns.

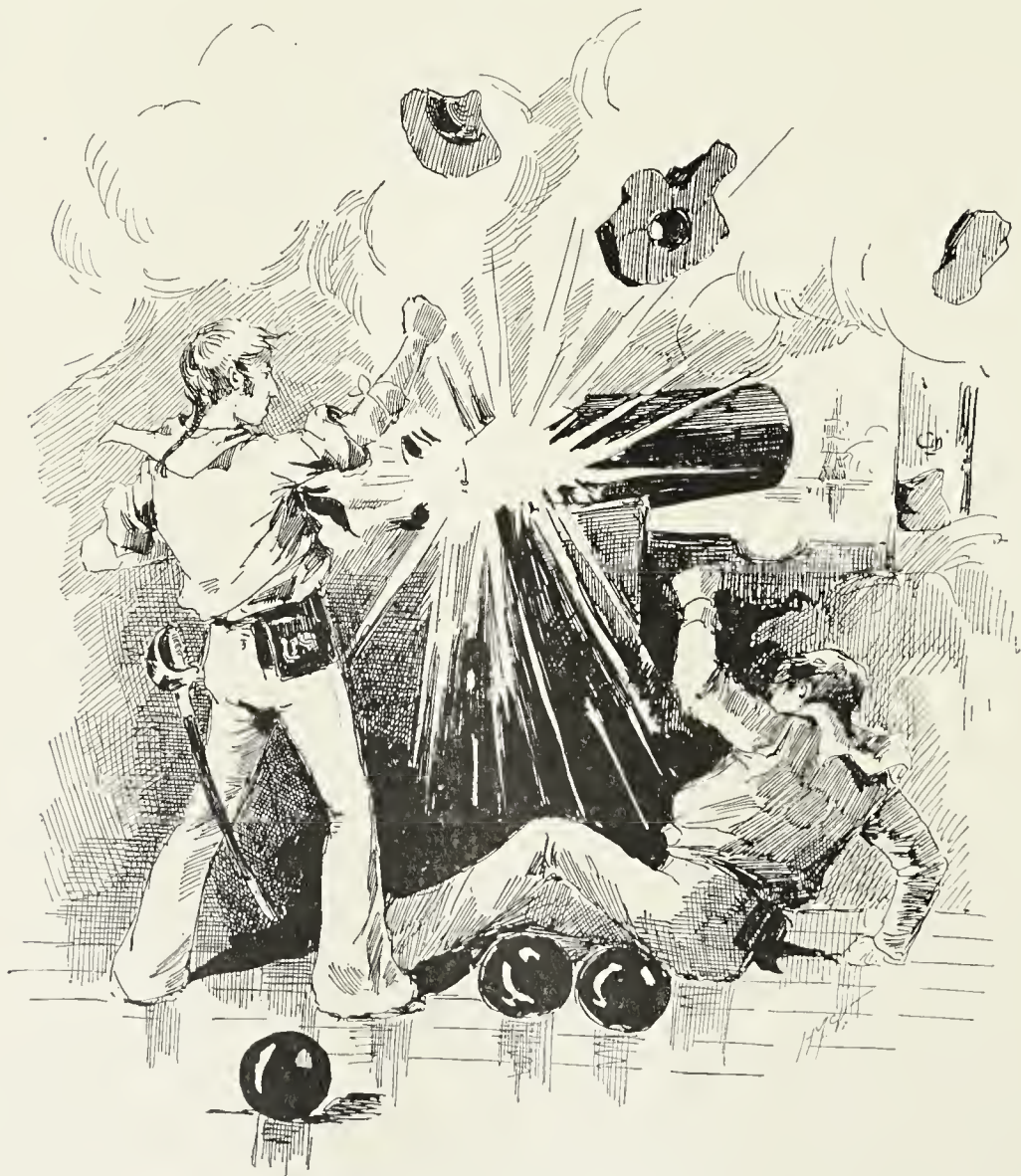
The action was opened by a gun from the bow of the "President," sighted and fired by Commodore Rodgers himself; so that this officer may be said to have fired the first gun of the war. His shot was a good one, hulling the enemy. A second shot from one of the guns of the first division broke off the muzzle of one of the "Belvidera's" stern-chasers; and a third shot, fired by Commodore Rodgers, crashed into the stern of the chase, killing two men, and wounding several others. Certainly in their first action the Yankees showed no lack of skill in gunnery.

The chase was slow in responding to the fire; and although her commander, Capt. Byron, sighted the guns for the first few discharges himself,

his aim was by no means so good as that of the Americans. The British showed great energy, however, in defending their ship. Not content with the stern guns already mounted, they shifted to the stern ports two long eighteen-pounders on the main deck, and two thirty-two-pound carronades on the quarter-deck. With these they kept up a brisk fire, which soon became effective, many shots cutting the rigging of the "President," while one plunged down upon the deck, killing a midshipman and two or three men. But the superiority of the American gunnery was beginning to tell, when, at a critical moment, a main-deck gun, on the "President," burst with a stunning report; and the flying fragments killed or wounded sixteen men. The force of the explosion shattered the fore-castle deck. Commodore Rodgers was thrown high into the air, and, falling heavily on the deck, suffered a painful fracture of the leg. The crew was at once thrown into confusion and almost panic. Every gun was looked upon with suspicion. Encouraged by this confusion, the enemy worked his stern guns with renewed vigor, and at the same time lightened his ship by cutting away boats and anchors, and starting fourteen tons of water. Thus lightened, she began to draw away from the "President;" perceiving which, the latter ship yawed several times, and let fly full broadsides at the escaping chase. The shot rattled among the spars of the "Belvidera," but the nimble topmen quickly repaired all damages; and the British ship slowly but steadily forged ahead. Seeing no hope of overtaking her, Rodgers ordered the chase abandoned; and the American squadron again took up its search for the fleet of British merchantmen.

But this, the first cruise of the United States navy in the war was destined to be a disappointment to all concerned. The key-note set by the affair just related—in which the "President" lost twenty-two men, and permitted her adversary to escape—was continued throughout the voyage. Always finding traces of the enemy they were seeking, the Americans never succeeded in overhauling him. One day great quantities of orange-peel, cocoanut-shells, and similar fragments of tropical fruits gave the jackies assurance of the proximity of the long-sought enemy, and urged them on to renewed energy and watchfulness. Then the master

of an English letter-of-marque, captured by the "Hornet," reported that the day before he had passed a fleet of eighty-five sail, of which four



EXPLOSION ON THE "PRESIDENT."

were men-of-war. That night there was no room in the minds of the sailors for any thoughts other than those of big prize-money. But their golden dreams were never to be fulfilled; for, although the chase was

continued until within a day's run of the English Channel, no sight of the Jamaica fleet was ever gained. Abandoning this chase, the squadron returned to Boston by a Southern route; and, although constantly in the very highway of commerce, few sails were sighted. When port was reached, the results of a cruise that had occupied seventy days amounted only to the capture of one letter-of-marque, seven merchantmen, and the recapture of one American ship. But Rodgers heard, that, while he had been scouring the ocean with such meagre results, events of more importance had occurred nearer home.

The British ship "Belvidera," after her lucky escape from the "President," had made her way to Halifax, the chief naval station of Great Britain on the American coast. Her report was the first news of the declaration of war, for at that day news travelled slowly. Once alarmed, the British were prompt to act; and in a few days a squadron left Halifax in search of Commodore Rodgers. The force thus hurriedly gathered was quite formidable. The "Africa" of sixty-four guns, the "Shannon," thirty-eight, the "Guerriere," thirty-eight, the "Belvidera," thirty-six, and the "Æolus," thirty-two, made up the fleet despatched to chastise the headstrong Americans for their attempt to dispute with Great Britain the mastery of the ocean. Early in July, this force made its appearance off New York, and quickly made captures enough to convince the American merchantmen that a season in port was preferable to the dangers of the high seas in war-times. To this same fleet belongs the honor of the first capture of a war-vessel during the war; for the American brig "Nautilus," fourteen guns, was suddenly overhauled by the entire fleet, and captured after a plucky but unavailing attempt at flight.

Fourteen-gun brigs, however, were rather small game for a squadron like that of the British; and it is probable that His Britannic Majesty's officers were heartily glad, when, some days, later the United States frigate "Constitution" hove in sight, under circumstances which seemed certain to make her an easy prey to the five British ships.

It was on the 17th of July, 1812, that the "Constitution," after receiving a new crew at Annapolis, was standing northward under easy

sail on her way to New York. About noon four sails were sighted on the horizon, and an hour later the appearance of a fifth sail was duly reported. A careful scrutiny of the strangers convinced Capt. Hull that they were men-of-war, although their nationality could not be determined. Night fell before the ships could come within hailing distance; and, though Hull set private signals, no answer was returned. When day broke, Hull found himself fairly surrounded by British frigates. In addition to the squadron which has been described as leaving Halifax, there was the captured "Nautilus" with her guns turned against her own nation, and a captured American schooner which had been likewise pressed into the service. Clearly the "Constitution" was outnumbered, and nothing was left for her but flight.

The events of that three days' chase are told with great minuteness in the log-book of the "Constitution," to which many of those on board have, in later publications, added more interesting personal reminiscences. When the rising mists showed how completely the American frigate was hemmed in, hardly a breath of air was stirring. Although every sail was set on the ship, yet she had not steerage way; and Hull ordered out the boats, to pull the ship's head around and tow her out of range of her enemies. At the same time, gangs of sailors with axes cut away the woodwork about the cabin windows, and mounted two stern guns in the cabin and one on the upper deck. The enemy, in the mean time, were keeping up a vigorous fire, but without effect. Their ships were rapidly gaining, as they were enabled to set the boats of the whole squadron to towing the two foremost vessels. Hull saw that some new means of getting ahead must be devised.

Soundings were taken, and the ship found to be in twenty-six fathoms of water. All the available rope in the ship was then bent on to a kedge and carried far ahead, when the kedge was lowered to the bottom. The sailors then shipped their capstan-bars, and tramped about the capstan, until the ship was dragged up to the kedge, which was then hoisted and again carried ahead and let fall. This manœuvre was repeated several times with marked success; for the "Constitution" was

rapidly drawing away from her pursuers, who could not discover her means of propulsion. Out of sight of land as they were, the British did not for some time suspect the true cause of the sudden speed of the fugitive. When, after long scrutiny through their marine-glasses, they finally did discover the stratagem, the "Constitution" was far ahead; and though the pursuers adopted the same device, yet their awkwardness was so great, that even the superior force they were enabled to employ did not bring them up to their chase.

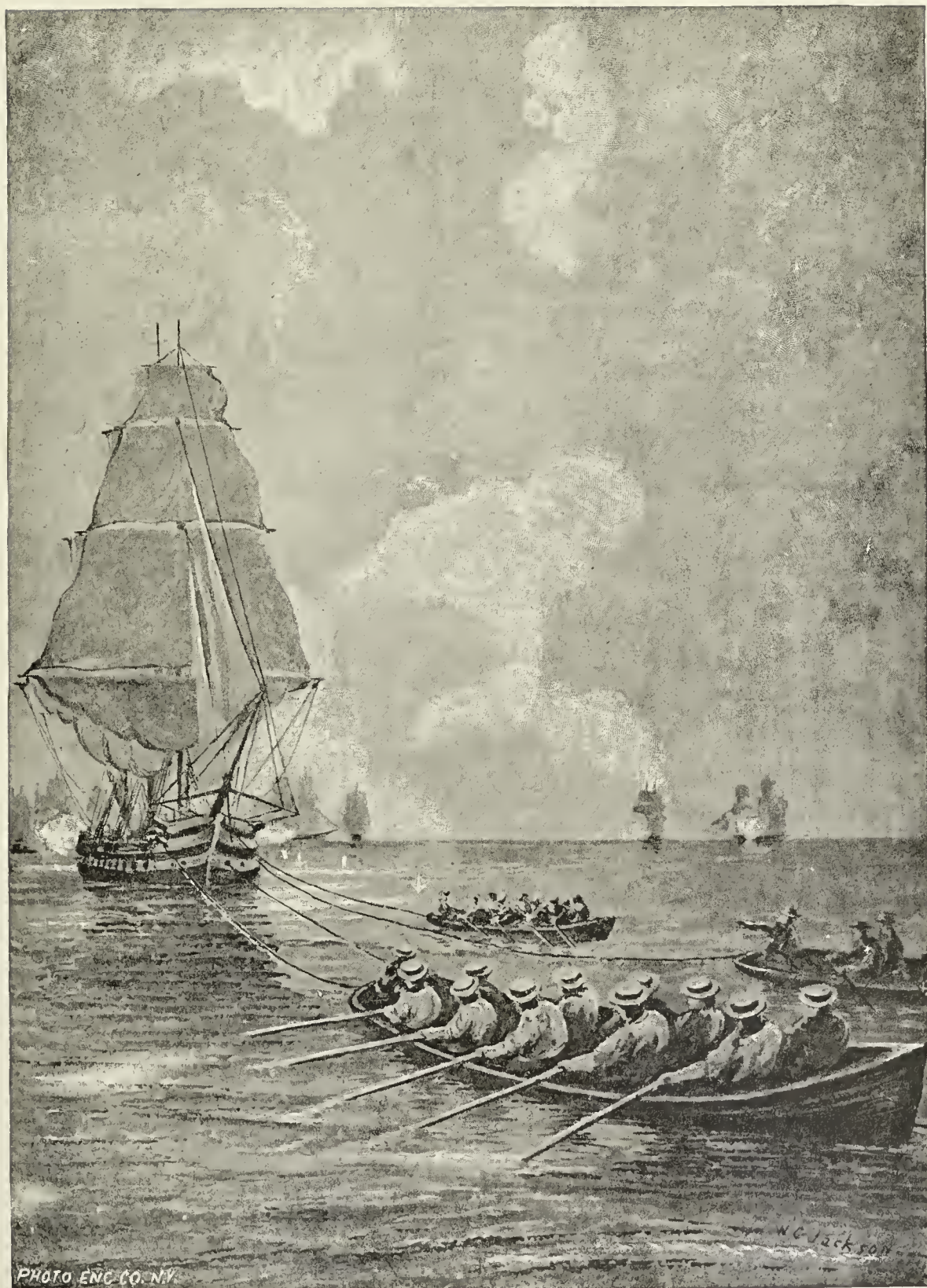
While the ships were thus being urged on by towing, kedging, and occasionally by sweeps, an intermittent fire was kept up by the British, and responded to by the "Constitution" from her stern ports. The guns which had been mounted by the Americans in the cabin, they were soon forced to abandon, as the explosions threatened to blow out the whole stern frame. With the stern-chasers on the gun-deck, however, a constant fire was maintained, in the hopes of crippling the enemy by a lucky shot.

For more than forty-eight hours the chase maintained this aspect of monotony. A dead calm prevailed the greater part of the time. Occasionally, light breezes filled the sails, and wafted the ships ahead for a few minutes; then, dying away, left the sea unruffled, and the sails flapping idly against the masts. British historians concur with those of our own country, in saying that the "Constitution," in seizing the advantages of the breeze, showed far better seamanship than did her enemies. While the British vessels lay to, to pick up their boats, the "Constitution" forged ahead, picking up her boats while under way. Later in the chase, the British totally abandoned their boats, and, when the American frigate had fairly escaped them, went about for some days picking up such boats as were found drifting on the broad ocean.

The morning of the second day of the chase dawned with a light breeze ruffling the water, and filling out the sails of the ships. Before the breeze died away, which it did in a few hours, the "Constitution" had gained on her pursuers so that she led them by more than four miles. Then the calm again held the ships quiet; and again the Americans saw their enemies closing in upon them by the aid of sweeps, and

towing with their boats. There was little rest for the crew of the American frigate. On the gun-deck, about the carriages of the great cannon, lay such of the men as were not assigned to duty in the boats or at the capstan. Wearied with the constant strain, they fell asleep as soon as relieved from active duty; though they knew that from that sleep they might be awakened to plunge into the fierce excitement of desperate battle. Exhausted as the men were, their officers were forced to endure a still more fearful strain. No sleep came to the eyelids of Capt. Hull, throughout the chase. Now encouraging the men, now planning a new ruse to deceive the enemy, ever watchful of the pursuing ships, and ready to take advantage of the slightest breath of air, Capt. Hull and his able first lieutenant Morris showed such seamanship as extorted admiration even from the British, who were being baffled by their nautical skill.

By skilful manœuvring, the Americans managed to keep to the windward of their enemies throughout the chase; and to this fact the success of Capt. Hull's most astute stratagem was due. Ever alert for any sign of a coming breeze, he saw on the water far to windward that rippling appearance that betokens the coming of a puff. Hull determined to utilize it for himself, and, if possible, trick the British so that they would lose all benefit of the breeze. The clouds that were coming up to windward seemed to threaten a squall, and driving sheets of rain were rapidly advancing toward the ship. With great ostentation, the "Constitution" was made ready for a severe gale. The enemy could see the nimble sailors taking in sail, and furling all the lighter canvas. Then the driving rain swept over the ship, and she was shut out of sight. Immediately all was activity in the tops of the British frigates. Reefs were rapidly taken in the larger sails, while many were closely furled. All forsook their course, and steered in different directions in preparation for the coming squall, which, indeed, was far less violent than the action of the "Constitution" seemed to indicate. But the shrewd Yankees on that craft, protected from spying British eyes by the heavy rain, were now shaking out the reefs they had just set; and under full sail the ship was soon flying away towards



ESCAPE OF THE CONSTITUTION.

home. After an hour of driving thunder-shower, the clouds passed by; and the wall-like edge of the shower could be seen moving rapidly away before the wind. The tars on the "Constitution" watched eagerly to see the British fleet appear. Farther and farther receded the gray curtain, and yet no ships could be seen. "Where are they?" was the thought of every eager watcher on the deck of the "Constitution." At last they appeared, so far in the distance as to be practically out of the chase. Two were even hull down; while one was barely visible, a mere speck on the horizon.

Though now hopelessly distanced, the British did not give up the pursuit, but held valiantly on after the American frigate. She had so long been within their very grasp that it was a bitter disappointment for them to be balked of their prey. But, as the wind now held, the American gained on them so rapidly that at last they unwillingly abandoned the chase; and, disbanding the fleet, each ship set off on an individual cruise, in the hopes that the enemy which had shown such ability in flight when overpowered would not deign to fly if encountered by a single hostile ship. This expectation was fully realized some weeks later, when the "Constitution" fell in with the British frigate "Guerriere."

Thus, after a chase of more than sixty-four hours, the "Constitution" evaded her pursuers, and made her way to Boston. Although they reaped no glory by their labors, the British did not come out of the chase altogether empty-handed. As the course of the vessels was along the New England coast, they were in the direct path of American commerce; and more than one wretched coaster fell into their clutches. At one time, a fine, full-rigged ship, flying the stars and stripes, came within sight; and the British, to lure her to her destruction, hoisted the American flag over all their vessels. But Hull was a match for them at strategy; and he promptly set the British colors at his masthead, and began so vigorous a cannonade that the stranger concluded that a merchantman had no business in that quarter, even though the Americans did appear to be rather in the majority.

By his able seamanship in this chase Capt. Hull gained for himself a national reputation. The newspapers of the day vied with each other in

pointing out the manœuvres in which he had excelled his enemies, — how he had picked up his boats while under way, though the enemy were forced to cut theirs adrift; how he had come out of the chase without injury, and after parting with only a few gallons of water, though a less cool-headed commander would have thrown overboard guns, ammunition, and every thing movable, in the face of so great a danger. A modest sailor, as well as a skilful one, Capt. Hull showed himself to be; for, while the popular adulation was at its height, he inserted a card in the books of the Exchange Coffee-House at Boston, begging his friends to “make a transfer of a great part of their good wishes to Lieut. Morris and the other brave officers and crew under his command, for their very great exertions and prompt attention to orders while the enemy were in chase.”

Leaving the “Constitution” thus snugly in port at Boston, we will turn aside to follow the fortunes of a ship, which, though belated in getting out to sea, yet won the honor of capturing the first British war-vessel taken during the war.

When Commodore Rodgers set sail from New York with his squadron, in the fruitless pursuit of the fleet of Jamaica men, he left in the harbor the small frigate “Essex,” under the command of Capt. David Porter. The ship was thoroughly dismantled, — stripped of her rigging, her hold broken out, and provided neither with armament, ammunition, nor crew. Her captain, however, was a man of indomitable energy; and by dint of much hard work, and constant appeals to the authorities at Washington, he managed to get his ship in order, and leave the harbor within a fortnight after the departure of the squadron under Rodgers’s command.

The “Essex” was a small frigate, lightly sparred, rating as a thirty-two-gun ship, but mounting twenty-six guns only, of which six were twelve-pounders, and the remainder carronades of thirty-two pounds. A carronade is a short cannon of large calibre, but of very short range. Capt. Porter protested vigorously against being furnished with a battery so useless except at close quarters: but his protests were unheeded; and the “Essex” put to sea, trusting to her ability to get alongside the enemy, where her carronades would be of some use.

Among the midshipmen who bunked, messed, and skylarked together in the steerage of the "Essex," was one lad whose name in later days was to be inscribed on the roll of the greatest naval heroes of history. David Glasgow Farragut was a child of seven years of age when he was adopted by Capt. Porter, and began his training for a naval career. In 1810 the boy secured his appointment of midshipman; and now, in 1812, we find him enrolled among the "young gentlemen" who followed the fortunes of the "Essex." In those days the midshipmen were often mere boys. Farragut himself was then but eleven years old. But, boys as they were, they ordered the hardy old tars about, and strutted the streets when on shore-leave, with all the dignity of veterans.

That the discipline of the "Essex" was of the strictest, and that the efficiency of her crew was above criticism, we have the testimony of Farragut himself to prove. "Every day," he writes, "the crew were exercised at the great guns, small arms, and single stick; and I may here mention the fact, that I have never been on a ship where the crew of the old "Essex" was represented, but that I found them to be the best swordsmen on board. They had been so thoroughly trained as boarders, that every man was prepared for such an emergency, with his cutlass as sharp as a razor, a dirk made by the ship's armorer out of a file, and a pistol."

Hardly were the Highlands of Navesink lost to sight below the horizon, when Porter began to receive evidences that his cruise was to be a lucky one. Several brigs were captured, and sent into New York; but the tars of the "Essex" were beginning to grow weary of small game, and hoped, each time a sail was sighted, that it might be a British man-of-war. At last a small squadron hove into sight, the appearance of which seemed to indicate that the jacksies might smell gunpowder to their hearts' content before the next day.

It was late at night when the strange fleet was sighted; and the "Essex" was soon running down upon them, before a fresh breeze. Although the moon was out, its light was obscured by dense masses of cloud, that were driven rapidly across the sky; while over the water hung

a light haze, that made difficult the discovery of objects at any distance. The "Essex" soon came near enough to the squadron to ascertain that it was a fleet of British merchantmen and transports convoyed by a frigate and bomb-vessel. The frigate was at the head of the line; and the "Essex," carefully concealing her hostile character, clapped on all sail and pressed forward, in the hopes of bringing on an action. After passing the hindermost transport, however, the American ship was hailed by a second transport, which soon suspected her hostile character and threatened to give the alarm. Instantly the ports of the "Essex" were knocked out, the guns trained on the enemy, and the transport was ordered to haul out of the line at once, and silently, under penalty of being fired into. The defenceless ship complied, and was at once taken possession of, and the soldiers on board were transferred to the "Essex." This operation took so much time, that, by the time it was concluded, day dawned over the ocean; and the attack upon the British frigate was abandoned.

Again the "Essex," continued her cruise in search of an enemy worthy of her metal. For two or three days she beat about the ocean in the usual track of ships, without sighting a single sail. The ship had been so disguised, that the keenest-eyed lookout would never have taken her for a ship-of-war. The top-gallant masts were housed, the ports of the gun-deck closed in, and her usually trim cordage and nicely squared yards were now set in a way that only the most shiftless of merchant skippers would tolerate. Not many days passed before the enemy fell into the trap thus set for him.

When on the 13th of August Capt. Porter learned that a sail to windward, apparently a British man-of-war, was bearing down upon the "Essex," he carried his little bit of acting still further. Instead of the great crowd of agile sailors that spring into the rigging of a man-of-war, at the order to make sail, only a handful, in obedience to Porter's orders, awkwardly set on the "Essex" all the sail she would carry. Two long, heavy cables dragging in the water astern so retarded the ship, that the stranger, coming down gallantly, thought he had fallen in with a lumber-

ing old American merchantman, which was making frantic, but futile, efforts to escape.

Had the British captain been able to look behind the closed ports of the "Essex," he would have formed a very different idea of the character of his chase. He would have seen a roomy gun-deck, glistening with that whiteness seen only on the decks of well-kept men-of-war. Down either side of the deck stretched a row of heavy carronades, each with its crew of gunners grouped about the breech, and each shotted and primed ready for the opening volley. From the magazine amidships, to the gun-deck, reached a line of stewards, waiters, and cooks, ready to pass up cartridges; for on a man-of-war, in action, no one is an idler. Active boys were skurrying about the deck, barefooted, and stripped to the waist. These were the "powder monkeys," whose duty it would be, when the action opened, to take the cartridges from the line of powder-passers and carry it to the guns. On the spar-deck, only a few sailors and officers were visible to the enemy; but under the taffrail lay crouched scores of blue-uniformed jackies, with smooth-faced middies and veteran lieutenants, ready to spring into the rigging at the word of command, or to swarm over the side and board the enemy, should the gunwales of the vessels touch.

All this preparation, however, was unknown to the "Englishman," who came boldly on, doubting nothing that the "Essex" would that day be added to his list of prizes. As he drew nearer, the American sailors could see that their foe was much their inferior in size and armament; and the old tars who had seen service before growled out their dissatisfaction, that the action should be nothing but a scrimmage after all. In a few minutes, the bold Britons gave three ringing cheers, and let fly a broadside at the "Essex." In an instant the ports of the sham merchantman were knocked out; and, with a war-like thundér, the heavy carronades hurled their ponderous missiles against the side of the assailant. The astonished Englishmen replied feebly, but were quickly driven from their posts by the rapidity of the American fire; and, in eight minutes after the action was opened, the British hauled down their

flag. The captured ship proved to be the sloop-of-war "Alert," mounting twenty eighteen-pounder carronades. The boarding officer found her badly cut up, and seven feet of water in the hold. The officers were transferred to the "Essex," and the "Alert" taken in tow. Circumstances, however, forced the Americans to part in a very few days.

The chief cause which led to the separation of the two vessels was an incipient mutiny, which was discovered by Midshipman Farragut, and was only averted by the perfect discipline of the American crew. An exercise to which the greatest attention was given was the "fire-drill." When the cry of fire was raised on the ship, every man seized his cutlass and blanket, and went to quarters as though the ship were about to go into action. Capt. Porter was accustomed, that his men might be well prepared for any emergency, to raise this cry of fire at all hours of the night; and often he caused a slight smoke to be created in the hold, further to try the nerves of his men. Shortly after the "Alert" was captured, and while the "Essex" was crowded with prisoners, some of the captives conspired to seize the ship, and carry her to England. One night, as Farragut was sleeping in his hammock, a strange feeling of fear came over him; and he opened his eyes to find the coxswain of the captain's gig of the "Alert" standing over him with a pistol in his hand. The boy knew him to be a prisoner, and, seeing him armed, was convinced that something was wrong. Expecting every moment to be killed, he lay still in his hammock, until the man turned on his heel and walked away. Then Farragut slipped out, and ran to the captain's cabin to report the incident. Porter rushed upon the berth-deck in an instant. "Fire! fire!" shouted he at the top of his voice; and in an instant the crew were at their quarters, in perfect order. The mutineers thought that a bad time for their project, and it was abandoned. The next day the prisoners were sent on board the "Alert," and that vessel sent into St. Johns as a cartel.

The capture of the "Alert" reflected no great glory upon the Americans, for the immense superiority of the "Essex" rendered her success certain. It is, however, of interest as being the first capture of a British

war-vessel. The action made the honors easy between the two nations; for while the Americans had the "Alert," the British were captors of the brig "Nautilus." This equality was not of long duration, however; for an action soon followed which set all America wild with exultation.

After her escape from the British fleet, the "Constitution" remained at Boston only a few days, and then set out on a cruise to the eastward along the New England coast. Bad luck seemed to follow her, and she had reached a point off Cape Sable before she made a prize. Here two or three prizes of little value were taken; and an English sloop-of-war was forced to relinquish an American brig, which had been recently captured. Shortly afterwards, a Salem privateer was overhauled, the captain of which reported an English frigate cruising in the neighborhood; and Capt. Hull straightway set out to discover the enemy.

The frigate which had been sighted by the Salem privateer, and for which Hull was so eagerly seeking, was the "Guerriere," a thirty-eight-gun ship commanded by Capt. Dacres. With both ship and captain, Capt. Hull had previously had some little experience. The "Guerriere" was one of the ships in the squadron from which the "Constitution" had so narrowly escaped a few weeks before, while Capt. Dacres was an old acquaintance. A story current at the time relates, that, before the war, the "Guerriere" and the "Constitution" were lying in the Delaware; and the two captains, happening to meet at some entertainment on shore, fell into a discussion over the merits of their respective navies. Although even then the cloud of war was rising on the horizon, each was pleasant and good-natured; and the discussion assumed no more serious form than lively banter.

"Well," said Hull at last, "you may just take good care of that ship of yours, if ever I catch her in the 'Constitution.'"

Capt. Dacres laughed good-humoredly, and offered to bet a sum of money, that in the event of a conflict his confident friend would find himself the loser.

"No," said Hull, "I'll bet no money on it; but I will stake you a hat, that the 'Constitution' comes out victorious."

"Done," responded Dacres; and the bet was made. War was soon declared; and, as it happened, the two friends were pitted against each other early in the hostilities.

It was not long after the American frigate parted from the privateer when the long-drawn hail of "Sail ho-o-o!" from the lookout aloft announced the discovery of another vessel. The course of the "Constitution" was at once shaped toward the stranger. In half an hour she was made out to be a frigate, and from her actions was evidently anxious to come alongside the American ship. As more than an hour must elapse before the ships could come together, Capt. Hull made his preparations for action with the greatest deliberation. The top-gallant sails were furled, and the lighter spars lowered to the deck. Through their glasses, the officers could see the enemy making similar preparations, and waiting deliberately for the "Constitution" to come down.

At five o'clock in the afternoon the two ships were rapidly nearing, and the drums on the American frigate beat to quarters. Then followed the rush of barefooted men along the deck, as they ran hastily, but in perfect order, to their stations. As the roll of the drums died away, the shrill voices of the boyish midshipmen arose, calling off the quarter-bills, and answered by the gruff responses of the men at their posts. Every man, from the cook to the captain, knew his place, and hurried to it. The surgeon, with his assistants, descended to the cock-pit. The carpenter and his mates made ready their felt-covered plugs, for stopping holes made by the enemy's shot. The topmen clambered to their posts in the rigging, led by the midshipmen who were to command them. The line of powder-passers was formed; and the powder-monkeys gave up skylarking, and began to look sober at the thought of the business in hand.

The "Guerriere" was not behindhand in her preparations for action. Capt. Dacres had suspected the character of the American vessel, from the first moment she had been sighted. On board the English frigate was Capt. William B. Orne, a Marblehead sailor who had been captured by the "Guerriere" some days before. "Capt. Dacres seemed anxious to ascertain her character," wrote Capt. Orne, shortly after the battle, "and

after looking at her for that purpose, handed me his spy-glass, requesting me to give him my opinion of the stranger. I soon saw, from the peculiarity of her sails and her general appearance, that she was without doubt an American frigate, and communicated the same to Capt. Dacres. He immediately replied, that he thought she came down too boldly for an American; but soon after added, 'The better he behaves, the more credit we shall gain by taking him.'

"The two ships were rapidly approaching each other, when the '*Guerriere*' backed her main topsail, and waited for her opponent to come down and commence the action. He then set an English flag at each masthead, beat to quarters, and made ready for the fight.

"When the strange frigate came down to within two or three miles distant, he hauled upon the wind, took in all his light sails, reefed his topsails, and deliberately prepared for action. It was now about five in the afternoon, when he filled away and ran down for the '*Guerriere*.' At this moment Capt. Dacres said politely to me, 'Capt. Orne, as I suppose you do not wish to fight against your own countrymen, you are at liberty to retire below the water-line.' It was not long after this, before I retired from the quarter-deck to the cock-pit." It may be well here to supplement Capt. Orne's narrative by the statement that Capt. Dacres, with a chivalric sense of justice not common in the British navy of that day, allowed ten American sailors who had been impressed into his crew to leave their quarters and go below, that they might not fight against their country. Though an enemy, he was both gallant and generous.

The action was opened by the "*Guerriere*" with her weather broadside; the shot of which all falling short, she wore around, and let fly her port broadside, sending most of the shot through her enemy's rigging, though two took effect in the hull. In response to this, the "*Constitution*" yawed a little, and fired two or three of her bow-guns; after which the "*Guerriere*" again opened with broadsides. In this way the battle continued for about an hour; the American ship saving her fire, and responding to the heavy broadsides with an occasional shot.

During this ineffectual firing, the two ships were continually drawing nearer together, and the gunners on the "Constitution" were becoming more and more restive under their inaction. Capt. Hull was pacing the quarter-deck with short, quick steps, trying to look cool, but inwardly on fire with excitement. As the shot of the enemy began to take effect, and the impatience of the gunners grew more intense, Lieut. Morris, the second in command, asked leave to respond with a broadside.

"Not yet," responded Capt. Hull with cool decision. Some minutes later, the request was repeated, and met with the same response, while the captain never ceased his pacing of the deck. When within about half pistol-shot, another broadside came from the "Guerriere." Then the smothered excitement in Hull's breast broke out.

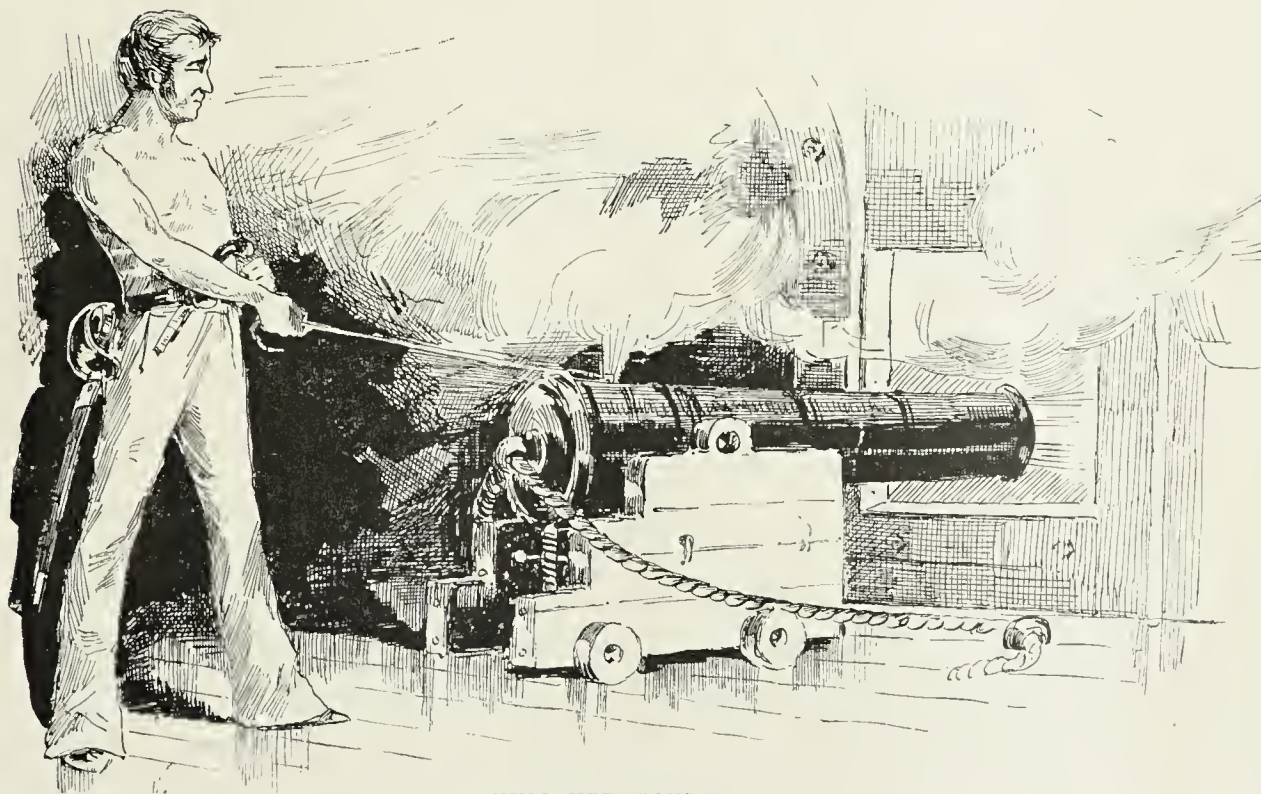
"Now, boys, pour it into them!" he shouted at the top of his lungs, gesticulating with such violence that the tight breeches of his naval uniform split clear down the side. Lieut. Morris seconded the captain in cheering on the crew.

"Hull her, boys! Hull her!" he shouted; and the crew, catching up the cry, made the decks ring with shouts of "Hull her!" as they rapidly loaded and let fly again.

The effect of their first broadside was terrific. Deep down in the cock-pit of the "Guerriere," Capt. Orne, who had been listening to the muffled thunder of the cannonade at long range, suddenly "heard a tremendous explosion from the opposing frigate. The effect of her shot seemed to make the 'Guerriere' reel and tremble, as though she had received the shock of an earthquake. Immediately after this, I heard a tremendous shock on deck, and was told that the mizzen-mast was shot away. In a few moments afterward, the cock-pit was filled with wounded men."

Though in his retreat in the cock-pit the captive American could hear the roar of the cannon, and see the ghastly effects of the flying missiles, he could form but a small idea of the fury of the conflict which was raging over his head. Stripped to the waist, and covered with the stains of powder and of blood, the gunners on the two ships pulled fiercely at

the gun-tackle, and wielded the rammers with frantic energy; then let fly the death-dealing bolt into the hull of an enemy only a few yards distant. The ships were broadside to broadside, when the Englishman's mizzen-mast was shot away, and fell, throwing the topmen far out into the sea. The force of the great spar falling upon the deck made a great



“HULL HER, BOYS!”

breach in the quarter of the ship; and, while the sailors were clearing away the wreck, the “Constitution” drew slowly ahead, pouring in several destructive broadsides, and then luffed slowly, until she lay right athwart the enemy’s bow. While in this position, the long bowsprit of the “Guerriere” stretched far across the quarter-deck of the American ship, and was soon fouled in the mizzen-rigging of the latter vessel. Then the two ships swung helplessly around, so that the bow of the Englishman lay snugly against the port-quarter of the Yankee craft. Instantly, from

the deck of each ship rang out the short, sharp blare of the bugle, calling away the boarders, who sprang from their guns, seized their heavy boarding caps and cutlasses, and rushed to the side. But a heavy sea was rolling and tossing the two frigates, so that boarding seemed impossible; and, as Dacres saw the crowd of men ready to receive his boarders, he called them back to the guns. Although each party stuck to its own ship, the fighting was almost hand to hand. Pistols were freely used; and from the tops rained down a ceaseless hail of leaden missiles, one of which wounded Capt. Dacres slightly. So near to each other were the combatants, that the commands and the cries of rage and pain could be heard above the deep-toned thunder of the great guns and the ceaseless rattle of the musketry. The protruding muzzles of the guns often touched the sides of the opposing ship; and when the cannon were drawn in for loading, the sailors on either side thrust muskets and pistols through the ports, and tried to pick off the enemy at his guns.

While the fight was thus raging, a cry of "Fire!" horrified every one on the "Constitution." Flames were seen coming from the windows of the cabin, which lay directly beneath the bow-guns of the "Guerriere." The fire had been set by the flash from the enemy's cannon, so close were the two ships together. By the strenuous exertions of the men on duty in the cabin, the flames were extinguished, and this, the greatest of all dangers, averted. Shortly after, the gun which had caused the trouble was disabled by a skilful shot from one of the Yankee's guns.

While the flames in the cabin were being extinguished, the Americans were making a valiant attempt to board and Lieut. Morris with his own hands was attempting to lash the two ships together. Abandoning this attempt, he leaped upon the taffrail, and called upon his men to follow him. Lieut. Bush of the marines, and Mr. Alwyn, were soon at the side of the intrepid officer, when, at a sudden volley of musketry from the British, all three fell back, poor Bush dead, and the two others badly wounded. The ships then drifted asunder; and the "Guerriere's" foremast was shot away, and dragged down the mainmast with it in its fall. The shattered ship now lay a shapeless hulk, tossing on the waves, but still



CONSTITUTION AND GUERRIERE.

keeping a British ensign defiantly flying from the stump of her fallen mizzen-mast.

The "Constitution" drew away, firing continually, and soon secured a raking position; seeing which, the British hauled down their colors. Lieut. Read was sent on board the prize, and, on the appearance of Capt. Dacres, said, —

"Capt. Hull presents his compliments, sir, and wishes to know if you have struck your flag."

Dacres looked significantly at the shattered masts of his ship, and responded dryly, —

"Well, I don't know. Our mizzen-mast is gone, our main-mast is gone; and I think, on the whole, you may say that we have struck our flag."

After looking about the ship, the boarding officer stepped to the side, to return to his own vessel. Before leaving, he said to Capt. Dacres, —

"Would you like the assistance of a surgeon, or surgeon's mate, in caring for your wounded?"

Dacres looked surprised, and responded, —

"Well, I should suppose you had on board your own ship business enough for all your medical officers."

"Oh, no!" answered Read. "We have only seven wounded, and they have been dressed long ago."

Dacres was astounded, as well he might be; for on the decks of his ship lay twenty-three dead or mortally wounded men, while the surgeons were doing their best to alleviate the sufferings of fifty-six wounded, among whom were several officers. Indeed, the ship looked like a charnel-house. When Capt. Orne, freed by the result of the battle, came on deck, he saw a sight that he thus describes: "At about half-past seven o'clock, I went on deck, and there beheld a scene which it would be difficult to describe. All the 'Guerriere's' masts were shot away; and, as she had no sails to steady her, she was rolling like a log in the trough of the sea. Many of the men were employed in throwing the dead overboard. The decks were covered with blood, and had the appearance of a ship's slaughter-house. The gun-tackles were not made fast; and several of the

guns got loose, and were surging from one side to the other. Some of the petty officers and seamen got liquor, and were intoxicated; and what with the groans of the wounded, the noise and confusion of the enraged survivors on board of the ill-fated ship, rendered the whole scene a perfect hell."

For some time after the "Guerriere" had been formally taken possession of, it seemed as though the "Constitution" would have to fight a second battle, to keep possession of her prize. A strange sail was seen upon the horizon, bearing down upon the "Constitution" in a way that seemed to threaten hostilities. Again the drums beat to quarters, and once again the tired crew went to their stations at the guns. But the strange ship sheered off, and the gallant crew were not forced to fight a second battle. All hands then set to work to remove the prisoners from the "Guerriere," which was evidently in a sinking condition.

In the first boat-load from the sinking ship came Capt. Dacres, who was politely shown into Capt. Hull's cabin. Unclasping his sword from its place at his hip, the conquered seaman handed it silently to Capt. Hull. The victor put it gently back, saying, —

"No, no, captain: I'll not take a sword from one who knows so well how to use it. But I will trouble you for that hat."

For a moment a shade of perplexity passed over the brow of the British captain; then he recollected the wager of a year or two before, and all was clear again. Unfortunately, the veracious chronicler who has handed this anecdote down to modern times has failed to state whether the debt was duly paid.

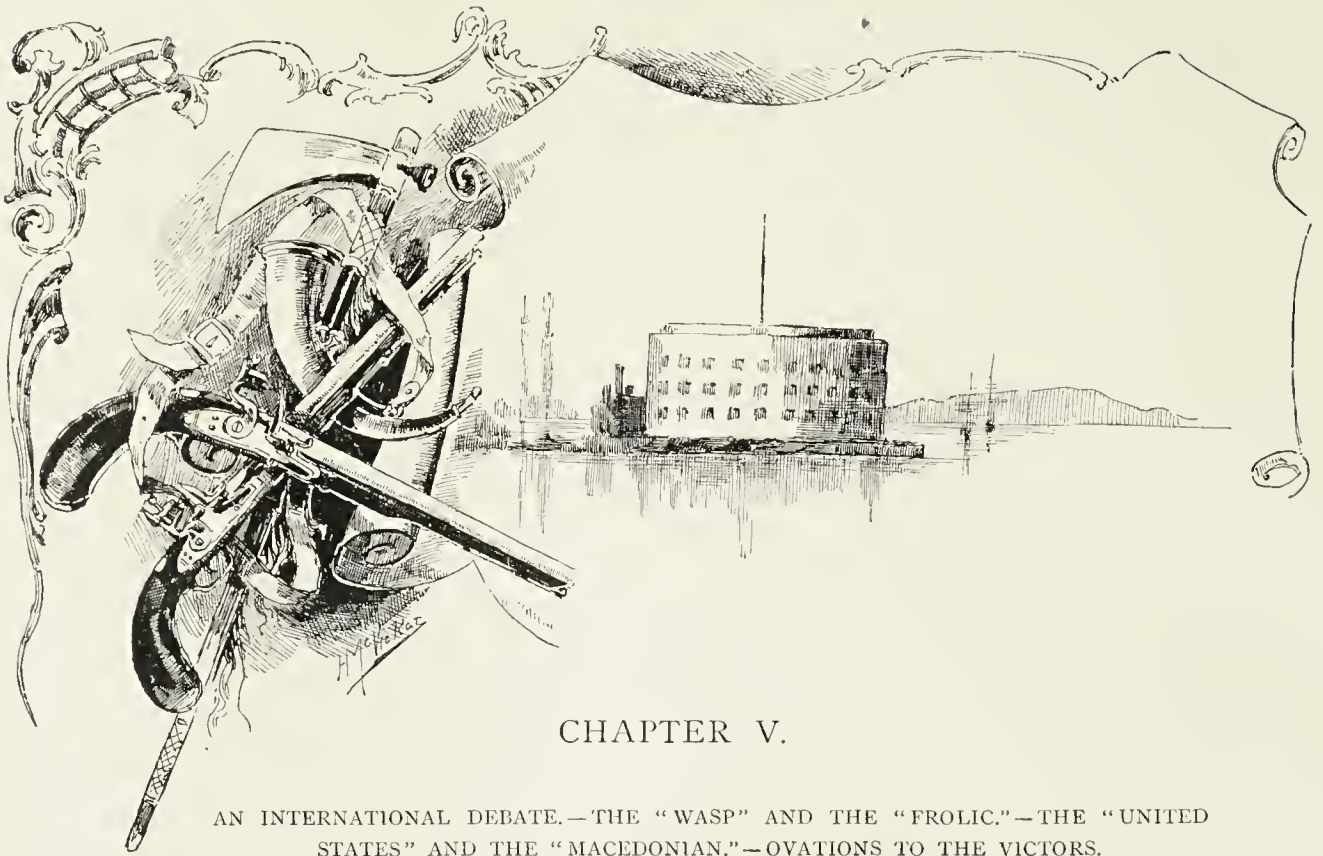
After some hours of hard work with the boats, the last of the prisoners, with their effects, were brought on board the "Constitution." Torches were then set to the abandoned frigate; and the sailors watched her blaze, until the fire reached her magazine, and she vanished in the midst of a tremendous explosion. Then, leaving behind her the floating mass of ruin, the "Constitution" headed for Boston, where she arrived after a few days of sailing.

Great was the excitement and exultation aroused among the people

by the arrival of the noble ship with her prisoners. She had, indeed, come at a time when the public mind required cheering; for from the interior came the reports of British successes by land, along the Canadian frontier about Detroit, and for weeks the papers had been unable to record any success for the American arms. But the report of the engagement with the "Guerriere" changed wholly the tide of popular feeling. Boston—the city which at the declaration of war had hung its flags at half-mast, in token of mourning and humiliation—Boston welcomed the conquerors with an ovation like to a triumph in the days of imperial Rome.

When the ship came up the harbor, she was met and surrounded by a great flotilla of gayly decorated boats; while the flags on the surrounding vessels were dipped in salutation as the war-scarred veteran made her stately way to the wharf. Here a volunteer artillery company was assembled; and, as the ship came up, they fired a national salute, which was returned from the guns so lately employed in defending the national honor. Quarters had been prepared for Capt. Hull in the city; and, as he landed, he found the streets through which he must pass decked with bright bunting, and crowded with people. His progress was accompanied by a great wave of cheers; for, as the people saw him coming, they set up a shout, which was not ended until he had passed from sight. At night came a grand banquet to the officers of the ship, at which six hundred sat down to the feast. The freedom of the city was presented to the captain; and at a later date came the news of sword presentations from citizens of New York, plate from the people of Philadelphia, and gold medals from Congress. Amid all the exultation, the rash arrogance of the British writers was not forgotten; and many a bumper was emptied to the success of the frigate described by British journalists as "a bunch of pine boards under a bit of striped bunting."





CHAPTER V.

AN INTERNATIONAL DEBATE.—THE “WASP” AND THE “FROLIC.”—THE “UNITED STATES” AND THE “MACEDONIAN.”—OVATIONS TO THE VICTORS.

THE rejoicing over the success of the “Constitution” had not died away in the United States when the English newspapers began to appear with elaborate articles, showing just why the battle had terminated as it did. “The ‘Constitution’ is the crack frigate of the American navy,” cried the apologists; but to this the Americans retorted by quoting the British description of the ship as “a bunch of pine boards.” The “Guerriere” was an “old worn-out frigate,” responded the English, returning to the charge. “She was on her way to Halifax to refit, when attacked.” Again they were refuted by their own statements; for, but a month before, the “Guerriere” was said to be “able to drive the insolent striped bunting from the seas.” Throughout the discussion, the shrewdness of the Americans enabled them to meet the arguments of the British at every point; but not until the charge was made, that the “Constitution” was chiefly manned by British sailors, did the people become thoroughly in earnest in the war of words.

Such a charge as this was adding insult to injury. Was not the British navy full of Americans who were forced against their will to serve against their own country, while the few Englishmen on the "Constitution" were enlisted with their own consent? For Capt. Dacres to say that his ship was weakened by allowing the ten Americans to go below, and then beaten by the efforts of the Englishmen on the "Constitution," was merely tantamount to saying that the victory hinged on the fact that Americans would not fight against their own country, while Englishmen did so willingly. But for Great Britain to exclaim against the American navy because it harbored a few Englishmen, was the rankest hypocrisy. So said the American journalists of the day; and, in support of their statement, they printed long letters from American seamen impressed into and held in the British naval service. One writes that he was impressed into his British Majesty's ship "Peacock," in 1810, and after serving two years he heard of the declaration of war. After a consultation with two fellow-seamen, both Americans, all decided to refuse to serve longer, claiming to be prisoners of war. But the captain under whom they were enrolled looked upon the matter in a different light. He heard their claim, pronounced it a bit of "confounded insolence," and straightway ordered that they be put in irons. After some hours for meditation in "the brig," the three sailors were taken to the gangway, stripped naked, and tied up, while a sturdy boatswain's mate laid on a dozen and a half blows of the cat. Later, when the ship went into action with a United States vessel, the three sailors asked to be sent below, that they might not fight against their own countrymen; but the captain's sole response was to call up a midshipman, and order him to do his duty. This duty proved to consist in standing over the three malcontents with a loaded pistol, threatening to blow out the brains of the first who should flinch from his work.

Three sailors were impressed after the war had begun. Learning that the ship on which they found themselves was to cruise upon the American station, they with one accord refused to serve. The response to this was "five dozen lashes well laid on." Being still mutinous, they received four dozen lashes two days later, and after the lapse of two more days

were flogged with two dozen more. But all the beating to which they were subjected could not compel them to serve against their country; and they were accordingly ironed and thrown into "the brig," where they lay for three months. When released from "the brig," they found the ship at London. Here they heard of the glorious victory of the "Constitution," and determined to celebrate it. By ripping up their clothing into strips, and sewing the strips together, a rude American flag was made; and with the most astonishing audacity the three sailors hung this emblem over a gun, and gave three cheers for the stars and stripes. This naturally brought them another flogging.

Flogging, however, could not always be resorted to in order to bring American sailors into subjection. It is estimated, that, when war was declared, there were five times as many American seamen in the British navy as were in the whole navy of the United States. To attempt to keep this immense body of disaffected seamen in order by the lash, would have been impracticable; and soon the custom arose of sending the more refractory tars into confinement at some English prison. Dartmoor prison was for a time the principal place of detention for pressed men; but, as it soon became crowded, it was given over to prisoners of war, and the hapless seamen were sent to languish in dismantled ships, known as "hulks." These hulks were generally old naval vessels, dismasted and stripped of all their fittings. Anchored midstream in tidal rivers, the rotting hulks tugged at their rusty chains, as the tide rose and fell, groaning in their bondage, and seeming as much imprisoned as the wretched sailors by whom they were tenanted. The captives lived in misery and squalor. Crowded together in stifling quarters between decks, they were the prey of vermin of all kinds. Their miserable diet, and lack of proper exercise, caused the scurvy in its most repulsive forms to break out among them. The only breath of fresh air they could obtain was when, in gangs, they were allowed to go on deck, and pace up and down under the watchful eyes of soldiery; then back to the crowded quarters below, to swelter in summer or freeze in winter. Such was their punishment for the crime of being loyal to their country.



PRISONERS IN THE HULKS.

Careful estimates show that at this time there were at least twenty thousand American sailors in the British navy, each one of whom was liable at any moment to be ordered into this inhuman captivity. A British official document of 1812 reported that 2,548 American seamen had been imprisoned for refusing to serve against their country. Hundreds of these were sent to the living death in the hulks. Was it any wonder that, with such facts before their eyes, Americans grew indignant at hearing that the victory of the "Constitution" had been won by the prowess of British seamen? But before many days had passed, a victory was recorded for the stars and stripes, which not even the acuteness of an English naval historian could ascribe to any cause other than the naval superiority of the victor.

This was the capture, by the United States sloop-of-war "Wasp," of the British sloop-of-war "Frolic," after a battle ever memorable for the extraordinary dash and bravery shown by each combatant. In size, the "Wasp" was one of the inferior vessels of the United States navy. In her architecture and appointments, however, she was the pride of the navy, and was often cited as a model ship of her class. Her armament consisted of sixteen thirty-two-pounder carronades, and two "long twelves."

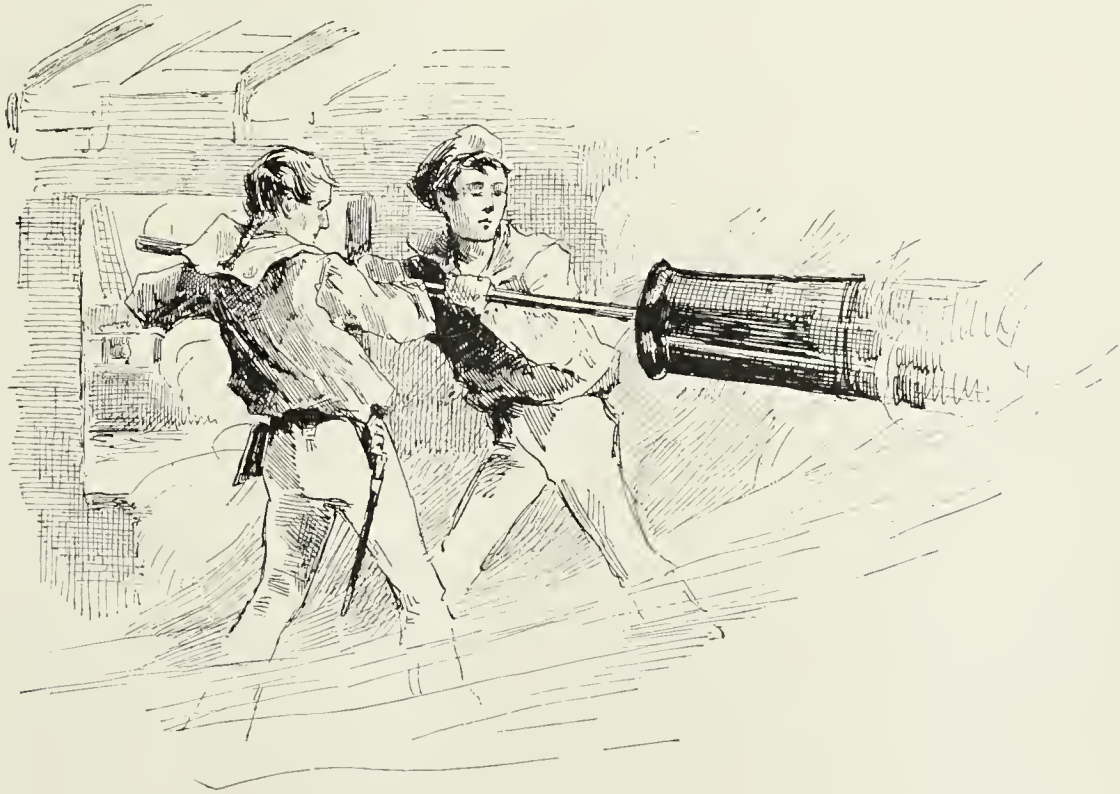
When the war broke out, the "Wasp" had just left the coast of Europe, bearing despatches from the foreign diplomatic representatives of the United States to the Government. It was accordingly near the middle of October before the sloop had been refitted, and, with a crew of one hundred and thirty-five men, left the Delaware, on her first cruise against the English. Her commander was Capt. Jacob Jones, who had served in the war with Tripoli, and had himself been a captive among the barbarians of Northern Africa.

After a few days' cruising, with one or two unimportant captures, a bunch of sails was sighted at some distance. The most careful examination failed to reveal the character of the strangers, and Jones determined to run down cautiously toward the squadron, to reconnoitre. The wind was blowing fiercely at the time, and a heavy sea was running,

from the effects of a gale of the day before, in which the "Wasp" lost her jib-boom, together with two sailors who were upon it. As the vessel bore down upon the strangers, Jones could see through his marine glasses that they were a convoy of merchantmen, under the protection of a British sloop-of-war. The merchantmen were evidently armed, and some seemed to carry as many as twelve guns. Deeming it unwise to attack at that moment, Capt. Jones kept on a course parallel with that of the enemy, during the remainder of that day and through the night. With the break of day, every officer of the "Wasp" was on deck, and all eyes were turned towards the quarter in which the Englishmen should be found. There, sure enough, they were. Six merchant ships and a bluff little brig, the port-holes in the sides of which showed her to be a war-vessel rating as a sloop. Signs of activity on board made it evident that the Englishmen had caught sight of the vessel which had been dogging them for the last day, and were making ready to give her battle. The British, too, had suffered in the gale, and the sailors could be seen shipping a new main-yard, and setting new topsails. On the "Wasp," the jackies were hard at work, getting in a spar to take the place of the jib-boom, which had been lost in the storm. Both ships were under short canvas, for the wind was still high. Instead of the English ensign, a Spanish flag fluttered from the halliards of the Englishman, — an unnecessary ruse to draw on an adversary already seeking a conflict.

It was half-past eleven in the morning when the action began. The day was an ideal October morning at sea, — cool, clear, and a breeze blowing fresh and constantly stiffening. The two vessels were running on the star-board tack, not sixty yards apart. As they ploughed through the waves, great clouds of spray dashed over the bows ; and every now and then a wave would sweep over the fore-castle, drenching the jackies as they stood at their quarters. As they sped along, the two ships exchanged broadsides, the "Frolic" firing three to the "Wasp's" two. After every broadside, the gunners cheered as they saw the damage done by their fire. When the state of the sea is considered, it seems marvellous that the broadsides should have done any execution whatever. The vessels were rolling terribly, now wallowing

in the trough of the sea, and again tossed high on the crest of some enormous wave. At one instant the muzzles of the guns would be pointed toward the skies, then actually submerged under the waves, from which they rose dripping, to be loaded and fired before another dip should soak the charge. Yet, with all this rolling to spoil their aim, the gunners of both



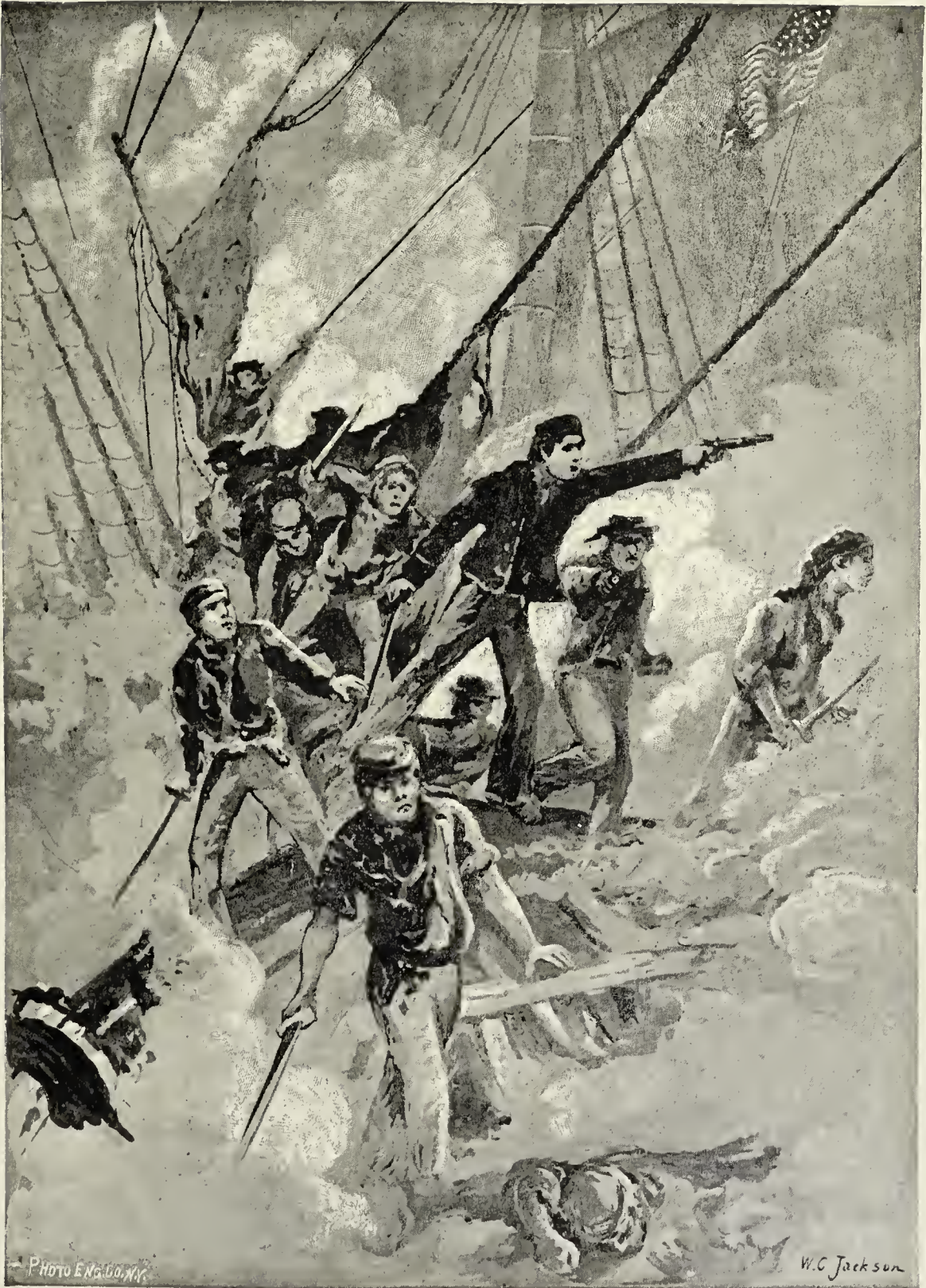
LOADING.

ships pointed their pieces with most destructive effect. Within five minutes from the time of opening fire, the main top-mast of the "Wasp" was shot away, and hung tangled in the rigging, despite the active efforts of the top-men, headed by the nimble midshipmen, to clear away the wreck. This greatly hampered the movements of the American vessel; and when, a few minutes later, the gaff and the main top-gallant mast fell, the chances of the American ship seemed poor indeed. The effects of the "Wasp's" fire were chiefly to be seen in the hull of her antagonist; but the first twenty minutes

of the fight seemed to give the Englishman every chance of victory, since his fire had so cut away the rigging of the "Wasp" that she became unmanageable. It is said that the difference between the execution done by the two batteries was due to the fact that the British fired as their ship was rising on the crest of the wave, while the Americans fired from the trough of the sea, sending their shot into the hull of the enemy.

While the fight was raging, the two ships were constantly drawing nearer together ; and just as it seemed as though the destruction wrought in the "Wasp's" rigging would inevitably lead to her defeat, the two vessels fouled. For an instant they lay yard-arm to yard-arm, and at that very moment the American gunners poured in a terrific broadside. So close were the two vessels to each other, that, in loading, the rammers were shoved up against the sides of the "Frolic." Before the gunners of the "Frolic" could respond to this broadside, their ship swung round so that her bow lay against the "Wasp's" quarter ; and her bowsprit passed over the heads of Capt. Jones and his officers as they stood on the quarter-deck. That was the moment for a raking volley ; and with deadly aim the Americans poured it in, and the heavy iron bolts swept the decks of the "Frolic" from stem to stern.

This turn in the tide of battle fairly crazed with excitement the sailors of the "Wasp." With ringing cheers they applauded the success of the last volley, and, springing into the hammock-nettings, called loudly for their officers to lead them on board the English ship. From the quarter-deck, Capt. Jones, with shouts and gestures, strove to hold back the excited men until another broadside could be given the enemy. But the enthusiasm of the sailors was beyond all control. All at once, they saw a sailor from New Jersey, named Jack Lang, spring on a gun, cutlass in hand, ready to board. All were about to follow him, when Capt. Jones called him down. Only for a minute did Jack's sense of duty overcome his enthusiasm ; and then, remembering that he had once been impressed on the "Frolic," his rage blazed up, and in an instant he was clambering over the nettings, calling for followers. Capt. Jones saw that the ardor of his crew was beyond his control, and ordered the bugler to call away the board-



BOARDING THE FROLIC.

ers. Headed by their officers, the bold tars swarmed over the nettings, and through the tangled rigging, to the deck of the enemy's ship. Each man clutched his cutlass viciously, for he felt that a desperate conflict was imminent. But when they dropped upon the deck of the "Frolic," a most unexpected spectacle met their eyes.

The broad deck stretched out before them, untenanted save by a few wounded officers near the stern, and a grim old British seaman at the wheel. Instead of the host of armed men with whom the boarders expected to dispute the possession of the ship, they saw before them only heaps of dead sailors lying about the guns which they had been serving. On the quarter-deck lay Capt. Whinyates and Lieut. Wintle, desperately wounded. All who were unhurt had fled below, to escape the pitiless fire of the American guns, and the unerring aim of the sailors stationed in the "Wasp's" tops. Only the old helmsman stood undaunted at his post, and held the ship on her course, even while the Americans were swarming over the nettings and clambering down the bowsprit. The colors were still flying above the ship; but there was no one left, either to defend them or to haul them down, and they were finally lowered by the hands of Lieut. Biddle, who led the boarding party.

No action of the war was so sanguinary as this short conflict between two sloops-of-war. The "Frolic" went into action with a crew of one hundred and ten men, fully officered. When the colors were hauled down, only twenty men were uninjured. Every officer was wounded, and of the crew thirty lost their lives. They had stood to their guns with the dogged courage of the English sailor at his best, and had been fairly mowed down by the destructive fire of the Americans. On the "Wasp," the loss of life was slight. The shot of the enemy took effect in the rigging chiefly. The three sailors who were killed were topmen at their posts, and the five wounded were almost all stationed in the rigging.

The Americans were not destined to enjoy their triumph long. Shattered though the "Frolic" was, Lieut. Biddle, with a prize-crew, took charge of her, and was in hopes of taking her safely to port; but his plan was rudely shattered by the appearance of an English frigate, only

a few hours after the action ceased. For the "Frolic" to escape, was out of the question. Both her masts had gone by the board shortly after her flag was struck; and, when the new enemy hove in sight,



READY TO BOARD.

the prize-crew was working hard to clear from her decks the tangled mass of rigging, wreckage, and dead bodies, that made the tasks of navigation impossible. The ship was rolling like a log, in the trough of the sea, and was an easy prize for an enemy of even less strength than the man-of-war which was then bearing down upon her.

The vessel which came rapidly down before the wind was the "Poictiers," a British seventy-four-gun ship, which would have been more than a match for the little "Wasp," even though the latter had been fresh and ready for battle, instead of shattered by desperate fight. Seeing no chance for a successful resistance, Capt. Jones determined upon flight, and ordered all hands aloft, to make sail. But the sails when shaken out were found to have been cut to pieces by the "Frolic's" shot; and the "Poictiers" soon came alongside, and changed the triumph of the Americans to defeat.

Though Capt. Jones and his gallant crew were thus deprived of their hard-won conquest, they received their full meed of praise from their countrymen. They were soon exchanged, voted twenty-five thousand dollars prize-money by Congress, and lauded by every newspaper and legislative orator in the country. The song-writers of the day undertook to celebrate in verse the famous victory, and produced dozens of songs, of which the following stanza may be taken for a fair sample:—

"Like the fierce bird of Jove the 'Wasp' darted forth,
And he the tale told, with amazement and wonder.
She hurled on the foe from her flame-spreading arms,
The fire-brands of death and the red bolts of thunder.
And, oh! it was glorious and strange to behold
What torrents of fire from her red mouth she threw;
And how from her broad wings and sulphurous sides,
Hot showers of grape-shot and rifle-balls flew!"

Let us now turn to Commodore John Rodgers, whose unlucky cruise at the opening of the war we have already noted. Having refitted his squadron in the port of New York, he set sail on a second cruise, leaving behind him the "Hornet." Again he seemed to have fallen upon unprofitable times, for his ships beat up and down in the highway of commerce without sighting a single sail. After several days of inaction, it was determined to scatter the squadron; and to this end the frigate "United States," Commodore Decatur, and the sixteen-gun brig

"Argus," Capt. Sinclair, left the main body of ships and started off on a cruise in company. After the two ships left the main body, Commodore Rodgers met with better success, capturing a Jamaica packet with two hundred thousand dollars in her hold, and chasing a British frigate for two hours, but without overhauling her.

In the mean time, the "Argus" had parted from her consort, and was cruising to the eastward on her own account, meeting with fair success. During her cruise she captured six merchantmen, and was herself chased by a British squadron. This chase was almost as memorable as that of the "Constitution;" for the little brig was hotly pursued for three days and nights, and, to escape her pursuers, was obliged to cut away her boats and anchors, and part with every thing movable save her guns. She escaped at last, however, and was for many months thereafter a source of continual annoyance to the commerce of the enemy.

After parting with the "Argus," the "United States" had made her course toward the south-east, in the hopes of intercepting some of the British West-Indiamen. But what the plucky sailors would consider better luck fell to the lot of the frigate.

At dawn on a bright Sunday morning, the lookout of the "United States" descried a sail about twelve miles away, on the weather-beam. Sail was crowded on the American frigate, and, urged along by a rattling breeze, she made towards the stranger. As the distance between the ships lessened, and the rigging of the stranger showed her to be a frigate, the enthusiasm among the gallant tars of the "United States" grew apace. Visions of battle, of glory, and, above all, of resultant prize-money, arose in their minds; and their shouts could be heard by the crew of the distant frigate before the two vessels came within range of each other.

The vessel toward which the "United States" was advancing was the "Macedonian," a British frigate rating thirty-eight guns, but said to have been carrying forty-nine at this time. She had for some time been reckoned a crack ship of her class in the British navy, and her crew was in admirable training. From her quarter-deck and forecastle groups of officers and seamen were watching the on-coming of the American frigate.

One of the powder-monkeys, named Samuel Leech, of the British ship, told graphically and simply the story of that day's doings on the "Macedonian."

"Sunday (Dec. 25, 1812) came, and it brought with it a stiff breeze," so runs the powder-monkey's tale. "We usually made a sort of holiday of this sacred day. After breakfast it was common to muster the entire crew on the spar-deck, dressed as the fancy of the captain might dictate,—sometimes in blue jackets and white trousers, or blue jackets and blue trousers; at other times in blue jackets, scarlet vests, and blue or white trousers; with our bright anchor-buttons glancing in the sun, and our black, glossy hats ornamented with black ribbons, and the name of our ship painted on them. After muster we frequently had church-service read by the captain; the rest of the day was devoted to idleness. But we were destined to spend the rest of the sabbath just introduced to the reader in a very different manner.

"We had scarcely finished breakfast before the man at the masthead shouted 'Sail, ho!'

"The captain rushed upon deck, exclaiming, 'Masthead, there!'

"'Sir?'

"'Where away is the sail?'

"The precise answer to this question I do not recollect; but the captain proceeded to ask, 'What does she look like?'

"'A square-rigged vessel, sir,' was the reply of the lookout.

"After a few minutes, the captain shouted again, 'Masthead, there!'

"'Sir?'

"'What does she look like?'

"'A large ship, sir, standing toward us.'

"By this time, most of the crew were on deck, eagerly straining their eyes to obtain a glimpse of the approaching ship, and murmuring their opinions to each other on her probable character.

"Then came the voice of the captain, shouting, 'Keep silence, fore and aft!'

"Silence being secured, he hailed the lookout, who to his question of

‘What does she look like?’ replied, “A large frigate bearing down upon us, sir.’

“A whisper ran along the crew, that the stranger ship was a Yankee frigate. The thought was confirmed by the command of ‘All hands clear the ship for action, ahoy!’ The drum and fife beat to quarters, bulk-heads were knocked away, the guns were released from their confinement, the whole dread paraphernalia of battle was produced; and, after the lapse of a few minutes of hurry and confusion, every man and boy was at his post ready to do his best service for his country, except the band, who, claiming exemption from the affray, safely stowed themselves away in the cable tier. We had only one sick man on the list; and he, at the cry of battle, hurried from his cot, feeble as he was, to take his post of danger. A few of the junior midshipmen were stationed below on the berth-deck, with orders, given in our hearing, to shoot any man who attempted to move from his quarters.

“As the approaching ship showed American colors, all doubt of her character was at an end. ‘We must fight her,’ was the conviction of every breast. Every possible arrangement that could insure success was accordingly made. The guns were shotted, the matches lighted; for, although our guns were all furnished with first-class locks, they were also furnished with matches, attached by lanyards, in case the lock should miss fire. A lieutenant then passed through the ship, directing the marines and boarders—who were furnished with pikes, cutlasses, and pistols—how to proceed if it should be necessary to board the enemy. He was followed by the captain, who exhorted the men to fidelity and courage, urging upon their consideration the well-known motto of the brave Nelson, ‘*England expects every man to do his duty.*’ In addition to all these preparations on deck, some men were stationed in the tops with small-arms, whose duty it was to attend to trimming the sails, and to use their muskets, provided we came to close action. There were others, also, below, called sail-trimmers, to assist in working the ship, should it be necessary to shift her position during the battle.”

Thus, with her men at their quarters, her guns primed, and matches

lighted, the "Macedonian" bore down to open the action. On the "United States," very similar scenes were being enacted. In some respects, the American frigate was a more formidable ship than the adversary she was about to engage. Her battery consisted of fifty-four guns, and some were of heavier calibre than those of the "Macedonian." Her crew, too, was rather larger than that of her adversary. But, in most respects, the ships were well matched. Indeed, the commanders of the two ships had met before the opening of the war, and, in conversation, agreed that their vessels were well fitted to test the comparative valor of Yankee and English sailors. Capt. Carden of the "Macedonian" had asked Decatur what would be the probable result, if the two ships were to meet in battle.

"Why, sir," responded the American captain, "if we meet with forces that might be fairly called equal, the conflict would be severe ; but the flag of my country on the ship I command shall never leave the staff on which it waves, as long as there is a hull to support it."

Such sentiments as this were ever in the heart of the gallant Decatur, whose service in the war of 1812 was but the continuation of his dashing career during the war with Tripoli. A captain of such ardent bravery could not fail to inspire his crew with the same enthusiasm and confidence.

In the crew of the "United States" were many young boys, of ages ranging from twelve to fourteen years. At that time many a lad received his warrant as midshipman while still in his tenth year ; and youngsters who wished to join the navy as "ship's boys," were always received, although sometimes their extreme youth made it illegal for their names to be formally enrolled upon the roster of the crew. Such was the station of little Jack Creamer, a ten-year-old boy, who had been serving on the ship for some weeks, although under the age at which he could be legally enlisted. When Jack saw the English frigate looming up in the distance, a troubled look came over his face, and he seemed to be revolving some grave problem in his mind. His comrades noticed his look of care, and rallied him on what they supposed to be his fear of the coming conflict. Jack stoutly denied this charge, but said he was

anxious to speak to the captain before going into action. An old quartermaster marched him up to the quarter-deck, and stood waiting for Capt. Decatur's attention. In a moment the captain noticed the two, and said cheerily, —

“Well, Jack, what's wanting now?”

Touching his hat, the lad replied, “Commodore, will you please to have my name put down on the muster-roll?”

“Why, what for, my lad?”

“So that I can draw my share of the prize-money, when we take that Britisher, sir.”

Amused and pleased with the lad's confidence in the success of the “United States” in the coming battle, Decatur gave the necessary order; and Jack went back to his post with a prouder step, for he was now regularly enrolled.

The two ships were now coming within range of each other, and a slow, long-distance cannonade was begun, with but little effect; for a long ground-swell was on, and the ships were rolling in a manner fatal to the aim of the gunners. After half an hour of this playing at long bowls, the Englishman's mizzen top-mast was shot away; and the cannon-balls from the “States” whizzed through the rigging, and splashed into the water about the “Macedonian,” in a way that proved the American gunners had the range, and were utilizing it. Capt. Carden soon saw that at long range the American gunners were more than a match for his men, and he resolved to throw prudence to the winds; and, disdaining all manœuvring, bore straight down on the American ship that lay almost stationary on the water, pouring in rapid and well-aimed broadsides.

Though a gallant and dashing movement, this course led to the defeat of the English ship. The fire of the Americans was deadly in its aim, and marvellous in rapidity. So continuous was the flashing of the discharges from the broadside ports, that the sailors on the “Macedonian” thought their adversary was on fire, and cheered lustily. But the next instant their exultation was turned to sorrow; for a well-directed shot cut away the mizzen-mast, which fell alongside, suspended by the cordage.

"Huzza, Jack!" cried the captain of a gun on the "United States." "We've made a brig of her."

"Ay, ay, my lad," said Decatur, who stood near by; "now aim well at the main-mast, and she'll be a sloop soon."

A few minutes later, the captain shouted to the nearest gunner, "Aim at the yellow streak. Her spars and rigging are going fast enough. She must have a little more hulling."

This order was immediately passed along the gun-deck, until every gunner was striving his utmost to plant his shot in the hull of the enemy. The effect was terrible. The great missiles crashed through the wooden sides of the English frigate, and swept the decks clear of men. She was coming down on the American bravely, and with manifest intention of boarding; but so skilfully was the "United States" manœuvred, and so accurate and rapid was her fire, that the "Macedonian" was unable to close, and was fairly cut to pieces, while still more than a pistol-shot distant. The "United States," in the mean time, was almost unscathed. The aim of the English gunners was usually too high, and such shots as took effect were mainly in the rigging. After pounding away at the "Macedonian" until the chocks of the fore-castle guns on that ship were cut away, her boats cut to pieces, and her hull shattered with more than one hundred shot-holes, the American ship drew away slightly. The British thought she was in retreat, and cheered lustily, but were soon undeceived; for, after a little manœuvring, the "United States" ranged up under her adversary's lee, securing a raking position. Before a broadside could be fired, the British hauled down their flag; and the action was ended, after just an hour and a half of fighting.

The slaughter on the British frigate had been appalling. From the official accounts; we glean the cold reports of the numbers of the killed and wounded; but for any picture of the scene on the decks of the defeated man-of-war, we must turn to such descriptions as have been left by eye-witnesses. Sailors are not much given to the habit of jotting down the descriptions of the many stirring scenes in which they play parts in their adventurous careers; and much that is romantic, much that is pic-

turesque, and much that is of historic value, has thus been lost to history. But of the details of the action between the "Macedonian" and "United States," the sailor-lad already quoted has left an account, probably as trustworthy as should be expected of a witness in his situation. He was stationed at one of the guns on the main-deck; and it was his duty, as powder-boy, to run to the magazine for powder for his gun. Before the entrance to the magazine was a heavy wooden screen, pierced with a hole through which the cartridges were passed out to the fleet-footed powder-monkeys, as they rushed up for more powder. Each boy, on getting his cartridge, wrapped it in his jacket, that no stray spark might touch it, and dashed off at full speed for his gun, quickly returning for further supplies.

With the men all standing pale and silent at the guns, the "Macedonian" came on doggedly towards her foe. Three guns fired from the larboard side of the gun-deck opened the action; but the fire was quickly stopped by the gruff order from the quarter-deck, "Cease firing: you are throwing away your shot!" Then came the roar of the opening volley from the American frigate.

"A strange noise such as I had never heard before next arrested my attention," wrote the English sailor-lad. "It sounded like the tearing of sails just over our heads. This I soon ascertained to be the wind of the enemy's shot. The firing, after a few minutes' cessation, recommenced. The roaring of cannon could now be heard from all parts of our trembling ship; and, mingling as it did with that of our foes, it made a most hideous noise. By and by I heard the shot strike the sides of our ship. The whole scene grew indescribably confused and horrible. It was like some awfully tremendous thunder-storm, whose deafening roar is attended by incessant streaks of lightning, carrying death in every flash, and strewing the ground with the victims of its wrath; only in our case the scene was rendered more horrible than that by the presence of torrents of blood, which dyed our decks. Though the recital may be painful, yet, as it will reveal the horrors of war, and show at what a fearful price the victory is won or lost, I will present the reader with things as they met my eye during

the progress of this dreadful fight. I was busily supplying my gun with powder, when I saw blood suddenly fly from the arm of a man stationed at our gun. I saw nothing strike him : the effect alone was visible ; and in an instant the third lieutenant tied his handkerchief round the wounded arm, and sent the poor fellow below to the surgeon.

“The cries of the wounded now rang through all parts of the ship. These were carried to the cock-pit as fast as they fell, while those more fortunate men who were killed outright were immediately thrown overboard. As I was stationed but a short distance from the main hatchway, I could catch a glance at all who were carried below. A glance was all I could indulge in ; for the boys belonging to the guns next to mine were wounded in the early part of the action, and I had to spring with all my might to keep three or four guns supplied with cartridges. I saw two of these lads fall nearly together. One of them was struck in the leg by a large shot ; he had to suffer amputation above the wound. The other had a grape or canister sent through his ankle. A stout Yorkshire man lifted him in his arms, and hurried with him to the cock-pit. He had his foot cut off, and was thus made lame for life. Two of the boys stationed on the quarter-deck were killed. They were both Portuguese. A man who saw one killed afterwards told me that his powder caught fire, and burnt the flesh almost off his face. In this pitiable situation the agonized boy lifted up both hands, as if imploring relief, when a passing shot instantly cut him in two.”

But the narrative of this young sailor, a boy in years, is almost too horrible for reproduction. He tells of men struck by three or four missiles at once, and hacked to pieces ; of mangled sailors, mortally wounded, but still living, thrown overboard to end their sufferings ; of the monotonous drip of the blood on the deck, as desperately wounded men were carried past. The brave seaman who left his bed of sickness for the post of duty had his head carried away by a cannon-ball. The schoolmaster who looked after the education of the midshipmen was killed. Even a poor goat, kept by the officers for her milk, was cut down by a cannon-ball, and, after hobbling piteously about the deck, was mercifully thrown overboard. And this was Sunday, Christmas Day !

The spot amidships where our sailor-lad was stationed must have been the hottest station in the whole ship. Many years later, as Herman Melville, the author of several exciting sea-tales, was walking the deck of a man-of-war with an old negro, "Tawney," who had served on the "Macedonian," the veteran stopped at a point abreast the main-mast. "This part of the ship," said he, "we called the slaughter-house, on board the 'Macedonian.' Here the men fell, five and six at a time. An enemy always directs its shot here, in order to hurl over the mast, if possible. The beams and carlines overhead in the 'Macedonian' slaughter-house were spattered with blood and brains. About the hatchways it looked like a butcher's stall. A shot entering at one of the port-holes dashed dead two-thirds of a gun's crew. The captain of the next gun, dropping his lock-string, which he had just pulled, turned over the heap of bodies, to see who they were; when, perceiving an old messmate who had sailed with him in many cruises, he burst into tears, and taking the corpse up in his arms, and going to the side with it, held it over the water a moment, and eying it, cried, 'O God! Tom'— 'Hang your prayers over that thing! Overboard with it, and down to your gun!' The order was obeyed, and the heart-stricken sailor returned to his post."

Amid such scenes of terror, the British tars fought on doggedly, cheering loudly as they worked their guns, but not knowing why they cheered; for the officers, at least, could see how surely the battle was going against them. When the "United States" drew away to repair damages, the British officers held a consultation on the quarter-deck. They could not but see that their position was hopeless; and, knowing all further resistance to be folly, the flag was hauled down. To the pride of the officers, the surrender was doubtless a severe blow. But Sam Leech remarks pithily, that to him "it was a pleasing sight; for he had seen fighting enough for one Sabbath,—more, indeed, than he wished to see again on a week-day."

Decatur at once hailed, to learn the name of his prize, and then sent off a boat with Lieut. Allen to take possession. He found the decks of the ship in a fearful state. Many of the crew had found liquor, and

were drinking heavily. Others were throwing the dead into the sea, carrying the wounded below, and sprinkling the deck with hot vinegar, to remove the stains and odor of blood. The dead numbered forty-three, and sixty-one were wounded. An eye-witness of the terrible spectacle writes of it: "Fragments of the dead were distributed in every direction, the decks covered with blood, — one continued, agonizing yell of the unhappy wounded. A scene so horrible of my fellow-creatures, I assure you, deprived me very much of the pleasure of victory." Yet, with all this terrific destruction and loss of life on the "Macedonian," the "United States" was but little injured; and her loss amounted to but seven killed, and five wounded. Indeed, so slight was the damage done to the American ship, that an hour's active work by her sailors put her in trim for a second battle.

While Lieut. Allen was examining the muster-rolls of the "Macedonian," a sailor pushed his way toward the quarter-deck, and cried out that he was an impressed American, and that he had seven mates aboard, all pressed into the British service. They had all been forced to serve against their country, and in the battle three had been killed. Just before the battle began, they had begged to be sent below, but were peremptorily ordered to stand by their guns, or expect to be treated as mutineers. Now that the battle was over, the five who were left alive begged to be taken into the crew of the "United States," which was accordingly done.

After the "Macedonian" had been formally taken possession of by Lieut. Allen, the British officers were removed to the American ship. Some of them were inclined to be very surly over their defeat, and by words and actions showed their contempt for the Americans, whose prisoners they were. In the first boat which went from the prize to the victor was the first lieutenant of the "Macedonian." As he clambered down the side of his vessel, he noticed that his baggage had not been put in the boat which was to bear him to the American frigate. Turning to Lieut. Allen, he said surlily, —

"You do not intend to send me away without my baggage?"

"I hope," responded Allen courteously, "that you do not take us for privateersmen."

"I am sure I don't know by whom I have been taken," was the rude reply, which so angered Allen that he peremptorily ordered the fellow to take his place in the boat, and be silent.

Whatever may have been the demeanor of the British captives, they met with nothing but the most considerate treatment from the American officers. Capt. Carden, on his arrival upon the deck of the victorious frigate, was received with the consideration due his rank and the brave defence of his vessel. He was conducted at once to Decatur's cabin, on entering which he took off his sword, and mutely held it out for Decatur's acceptance. Decatur courteously refused to accept it, saying, "Sir, I cannot take the sword of a man who has defended his ship so bravely; but I will take your hand." As long as Carden and his officers remained on the ship, they were treated with the greatest consideration, and were allowed to retain all their personal property. Every attempt was made to take away from them the bitter remembrance of their defeat. The innate nobility of Decatur's nature is well shown in a letter written to his wife a few days after the action. "One-half of the satisfaction," he says, "arising from this victory is destroyed in seeing the mortification of poor Carden, who deserved success as much as we did who had the good fortune to obtain it." When Carden left the ship, he thanked Decatur for his consideration, and expressed a desire to do likewise by the Americans, should he ever be able to turn the tables.

Amid the heat of battle and the excitement of success, Decatur did not forget little Jack Creamer, the lately enrolled ship's boy. Shortly after the close of the conflict, he sent for Jack to come to his cabin. Soon a much abashed small boy stood before the captain.

"Well, Jack," said the great man, "we did take her, after all."

"Yes, your Honor," responded Jack. "I knew we would, before we gave her the first broadside."

"And your share of the prize-money," continued Decatur, "may amount to two hundred dollars, if we get her safe into port. Now, what are you going to do with so much money?"

Jack's eyes had lighted up at the thought of such great wealth.

"Please, sir," he cried, "I'll send half of it to my mother; and the rest will get me a bit of schooling."

"Well said, Jack," said Decatur warmly; and the interview closed for the time. But the captain's interest in the boy was aroused, and for years he showed an almost fatherly regard for the lad. Jack had his "bit of schooling," then received a midshipman's warrant, and for years served with Decatur, giving promise of becoming an able officer. At last, however, his career was ended by the accidental upsetting of a boat when on a pleasure excursion in the Mediterranean.

After putting in for a short time at New London, the two ships, captor and captive, proceeded down the Sound to New York. Here they arrived on the 1st of January, 1813; and the news-writers of the day straightway hailed the "Macedonian" as "a New Year's gift, with the compliments of old Neptune." However, the news of the victory had spread throughout the land before the ships came up to New York; for Decatur had sent out a courier from New London to bear the tidings to Washington. A curious coincidence made the delivery of the despatch as impressive as a studied dramatic scene.

It so happened that the people of Washington had chosen the night of Dec. 28 for a grand ball, to be tendered to the officers of the navy, and particularly to Capt. Stewart of the "Constellation." A brilliant company was gathered, in honor of the occasion. The Secretary of the Navy, and other cabinet officers, lent their presence to the festivities. Capt. Hull of the victorious "Constitution" was present; and, to make the affair even more of a triumph, the captured colors of the "Alert" and the "Guerriere" were draped on the wall of the hall. Near midnight, the revelry was at its height. The brilliant toilets of the ladies; the men, gorgeous in the uniforms of the army, navy, or diplomatic corps; the light of a thousand wax-candles flashing from a myriad of sconces, — made the scene one of the utmost splendor. All at once, in the midst of the stately measures of the old-fashioned minuet, a murmur rose near the entrance to the hall, and spread until every one was whispering, that news had come of a great naval battle, a victory. Word was brought to

the Secretary of the Navy. He directed that the bearer of the despatches should be at once admitted; and, amid cheers and clapping of hands, Lieut. Hamilton entered the hall, and delivered his despatches to his father, the Secretary of the Navy. The tenor of the despatch was soon known to all; and Lieut. Hamilton turned from the greetings of his mother and sisters, who were present, to receive the congratulations of his brother-officers. He had brought the colors of the captured ship with him to the city; and Capts. Stewart and Hull immediately went in search of them, and soon returned, bearing the flag between them. The two veteran sailors marched the length of the hall, amid the plaudits of the gay company, and laid the colors before Mrs. Madison, — the Dolly Madison who is still remembered as the most popular of the “ladies of the White House.” Then the company proceeded to the banquet-hall, where, to the list of toasts already prepared, was added, “The health of Commodore Decatur and the officers and crew of the ‘United States.’”

Two weeks later, Capt. Decatur and his officers and the crew of the “United States” were sumptuously entertained by the citizens of New York. The officers were tendered a banquet in the great assembly-room of the City Hotel, which was decked with laurel and ship’s spars and sails. The chief table at the head of the room, at which sat Mayor De Witt Clinton and Capts. Hull and Decatur, was a marvel of decoration. Its centre was taken up by a sheet of water with grassy banks, bearing on its placid surface a miniature frigate floating at her moorings. Each of the smaller tables bore a small frigate on a pedestal in the centre of the board. On the wall at the end of the room hung a heavy sail, on which was printed the motto, —

“OUR CHILDREN ARE THE PROPERTY OF THEIR COUNTRY.”

After the dinner was ended and the toasts were begun, the health of the navy was proposed. At the word, the great sail began to ascend, and, being drawn to the ceiling, disclosed an illuminated transparent painting, showing vividly the scenes of the three great actions won by

the "Constitution," the "United States," and the "Wasp." The whole company rose and cheered, until the walls of the hall fairly rung.

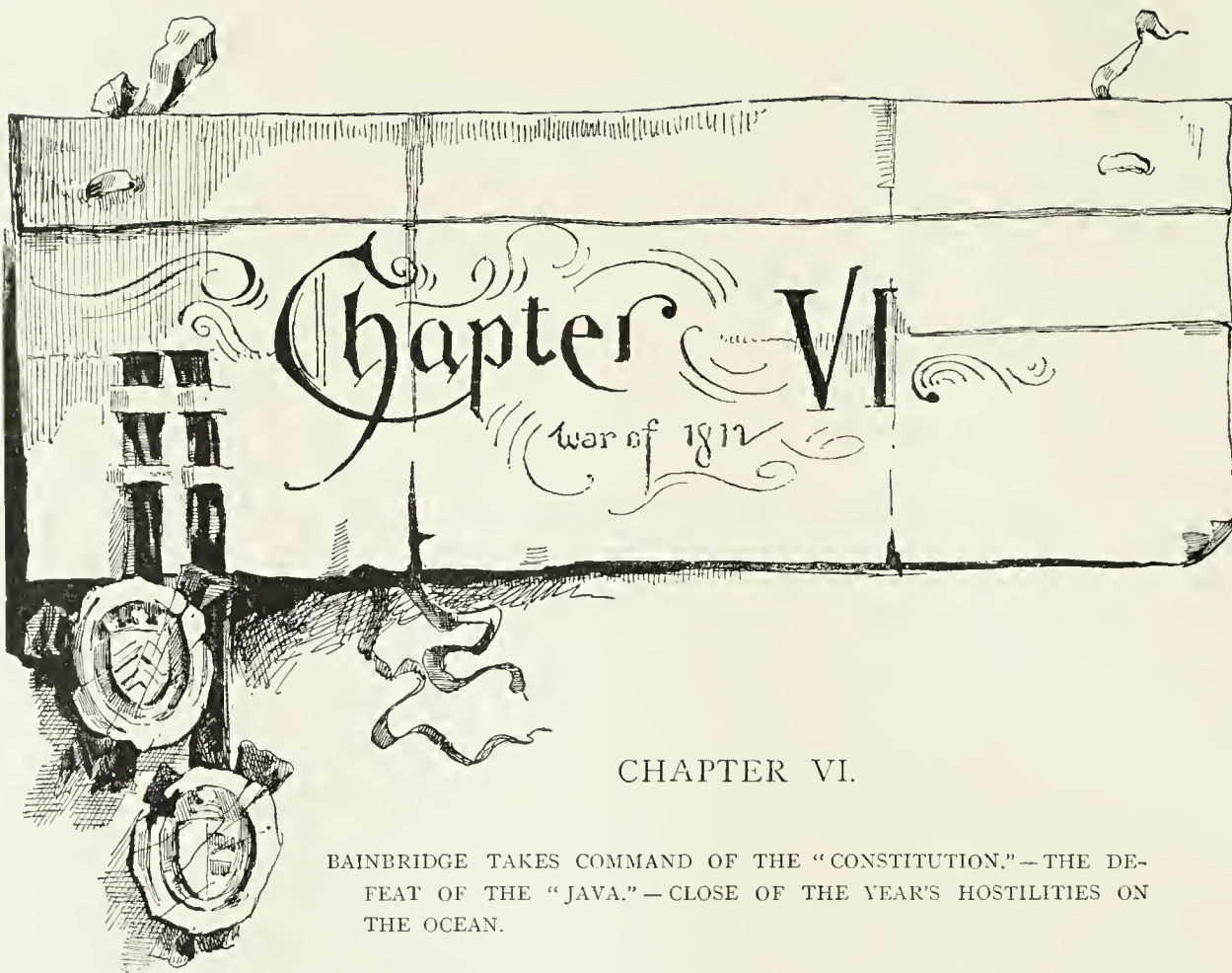
Three days later, the jackies from the forecastle of the "United States" were entertained. They were landed at the Battery, and marched in procession to the hotel, headed by a brass band which had been captured with the "Macedonian." Four hundred of the fine fellows were in the line, clad in the dress uniform of the navy of that time. Glazed canvas hats with stiff rims, decked with streamers of ribbon; blue jackets buttoned loosely over red waistcoats; and blue trousers with bell-buttons,—made up the toggery of the tar of 1812. As they marched, two by two, through the narrow streets that led to the City Hotel, the populace assembled on the sidewalks and in the windows along the route, greeting the jackies with cheers. The rear was brought up by the usual band of street-urchins, each of whom that day was firm in his determination to be a sailor.

After the banquet at the hotel, the sailors were marched to the theatre, where the pit had been set aside for them. The orchestra opened with "Yankee Doodle;" but the first bar had hardly been played, when the cheers of the blue-jackets fairly drowned the music, and the musicians were fain to stop. The programme had been arranged with special regard to the seafaring audience. Little children bounded upon the stage, bearing huge letters in their hands, and, after lightly whirling through the mazes of the dance, grouped themselves so that the letters formed the words,—

HULL, JONES, DECATUR.

Then came more cheers from the pit; and more than one glazed hat soared over the heads of the audience, and fell on the stage,—a purely nautical substitute for a bouquet. Late at night, the sailors returned to their ship, elated with an ovation the like of which has never since been tendered to the humble heroes of the forecastle or the ranks.





CHAPTER VI.

BAINBRIDGE TAKES COMMAND OF THE "CONSTITUTION."—THE DEFEAT OF THE "JAVA."—CLOSE OF THE YEAR'S HOSTILITIES ON THE OCEAN.



S Hull and Decatur sat in the gayly decorated banquet-hall at New York, and, amid the plaudits of the brilliant assembly, drank bumpers to the success of the navy, they little thought that thousands of miles away the guns of an American frigate were thundering, and the stout-hearted blue-jackets laying down their lives for the honor and glory of the United States. But so it was. The opening year of the war was not destined to close without yet a fourth naval victory for the Americans; and, at the very moment when they were so joyfully celebrating the glories already won, Capt. Bainbridge in the good ship "Constitution" was valiantly giving battle to a British frigate far south of the equator.

Before considering the details of this last action of the year 1812, let us recount briefly the movements of some American vessels in commis-

sion at this time. After sending the "Guerriere" to the bottom of the sea, and bringing her officers and crew in triumph into Boston, Capt. Hull had voluntarily relinquished the command of the "Constitution," in order that some other officer might win laurels with the noble frigate. In his place was appointed Capt. Bainbridge, who had served in the wars with France and Tripoli. After a short time spent in refitting, Bainbridge sailed from Boston, accompanied by the "Hornet," eighteen guns. The "Essex," thirty-two, Capt. Porter, was lying in the Delaware at the time Bainbridge left Boston, and her captain was ordered to cruise in the track of British West-Indiamen. After spending some time in this service, he was to turn southward and visit several South American ports, with a view to joining Bainbridge. Should he fail to find the "Constitution," he was free to act at his own discretion. This permission gave Porter an opportunity to make a cruise seldom equalled in naval annals, and which will form the subject of a subsequent chapter.

The "Constitution" and "Hornet" left Boston on the 26th of October, and shaped their course at once for the south. They put in at two or three ports which had been named to Capt. Porter as meeting-places, but, finding no trace of the "Essex," continued their cruise. At Port Praya in the island of St. Jago, and at Fernando Noronha, the two ships assumed the character of British men-of-war. Officers from whose uniform every trace of the American eagle had been carefully removed went ashore, and, after paying formal visits to the governors of the two islands, requested permission to leave letters for Sir James Yeo of His Majesty's service. Though directed to this prominent British naval officer, the letters were intended for Capt. Porter, and contained directions for his cruise, written in sympathetic ink. After the letters were deposited, the two vessels left; and we may be sure that the British colors came down from the masthead as soon as the ships were out of sight.

The next point at which the American ships stopped was San Salvador, on the coast of Brazil. Here Bainbridge lay-to outside the harbor, and sent in Capt. Lawrence with the "Hornet" to communicate with the American consul. Lawrence returned greatly excited. In the harbor

he had found the British sloop-of-war "Bonne Citoyenne," of twenty guns, which was on the point of sailing for England. A more evenly matched adversary for the "Hornet" could not have been found, and the Yankee sailors longed for an engagement. A formal challenge was sent, through the American consul, to the captain of the British ship, requesting him to come out and try conclusions with the "Hornet." Every assurance was offered that the "Constitution" would remain in



ASSUMING TO BE BRITISH MEN-OF-WAR.

the offing, and take no part in the battle, which was to test the strength of the two equally matched ships only. Some days later, this challenge was reduced to writing, and sent to the English captain. But that officer declined the challenge, giving as his reason the fact that he had in his ship over half a million pounds in specie, which it was his duty to convey to England. For him to give battle to the "Hornet," would therefore be unwise, as he would put in jeopardy this money which it was his duty to guard. This response was conclusive, and the Englishman must be admitted to have acted wisely; but the knowledge of the

valuable cargo of the "Bonne Citoyenne" only increased the desire of the Americans to capture her. The "Hornet" accordingly remained outside the harbor, as a blockader, while the "Constitution" continued her cruise alone.

She had not far to go in order to meet an enemy well worthy of her metal. Three days after parting with the "Hornet," two sail were made, well in shore. One of the vessels so sighted seemed to make for the land, as though anxious to avoid meeting the American ship; while the other came about, and made her course boldly toward the "Constitution."

It was about nine o'clock on a bright December morning that the "Constitution" encountered the strange vessel, which bore down upon her. A light breeze, of sufficient force to enable the vessels to manœuvre, was blowing; but the surface of the ocean was as placid as a lake in summer. The build of the stranger left no doubt of her warlike character, and the bold manner in which she sought a meeting with the American ship convinced Bainbridge that he had fallen in with an enemy. The "Constitution" did not for a time meet the enemy's advances in kind. Back of the advancing frigate could be seen the low, dark coast-line of Brazil, into whose neutral waters the Englishman could retreat, and thus gain protection, if the conflict seemed to go against him. Bainbridge determined that the coming battle should be fought beyond the possibility of escape for the vanquished, and therefore drew away gradually as the stranger came on. By noon the two ships were near enough together for flags to be visible, when Bainbridge set his colors, and displayed private signals. The enemy did the same; and, though his signals were unintelligible, the flag that fluttered at the masthead was clearly the flag of Great Britain. Bainbridge continued his retreat for an hour longer, then, being far enough from land, took in his main-sail and royals, and tacked toward the Englishman.

By this time the strange sail which had been sighted in company with the English ship had disappeared. The low-lying coast of Brazil had sunk below the horizon. From the deck of the "Constitution," nothing could be seen but the vast circle of placid ocean, and the English frigate about a mile

to the windward, bearing down to open the fight. The drums beat, and the crew went quietly and in perfect order to their quarters. They were no longer the raw, untrained crew that had joined the ship some months before. They were veterans, with the glorious victory over the "Guerriere" fresh in their remembrance, and now animated with a desire to add to their trophies the strange vessel then in sight.

As the enemy, which proved to be the "Java," thirty-eight, Capt. Lambert, came nearer, she hauled down her colors, leaving only a jack flying. A jack is a small flag hoisted at the bowsprit cap. The Union jack of the United States navy is a blue flag dotted with stars, but without the stripes of the national flag; the jack of Great Britain has the scarlet cross of St. George on a blue field. The Englishman's action in hauling down his ensigns puzzled Bainbridge, who sent a shot as an order that they be raised again. The response to this reminder came in the form of a heavy broadside, and the action opened.

In the light wind that was blowing, the enemy proved the better sailer, and soon forged ahead. His object was to cross the bows of the American ship, and get in a raking broadside,—the end and aim of most of the naval manœuvring in those days of wooden ships and heavy batteries. By skilful seamanship, Bainbridge warded off the danger; and the fight continued broadside to broadside. The firing on both sides was rapid and well directed. After half an hour of fighting, the "Constitution" was seriously crippled by a round shot, which carried away her wheel, and wounded Bainbridge by driving a small copper bolt deep into his thigh. For a moment it seemed as though the American ship was lost. Having no control over the rudder, her head fell off, her sails flapped idly against the spars, and the enemy was fast coming into an advantageous position. But, though wounded, the indomitable Yankee captain was equal to the occasion. Tackle was rigged upon the rudder-post between decks, and a crew of jackies detailed to work the improvised helm. The helmsmen were far out of earshot of the quarter-deck: so a line of midshipmen was formed from the quarter-deck to the spot where the sailors tugged at the steering-lines.

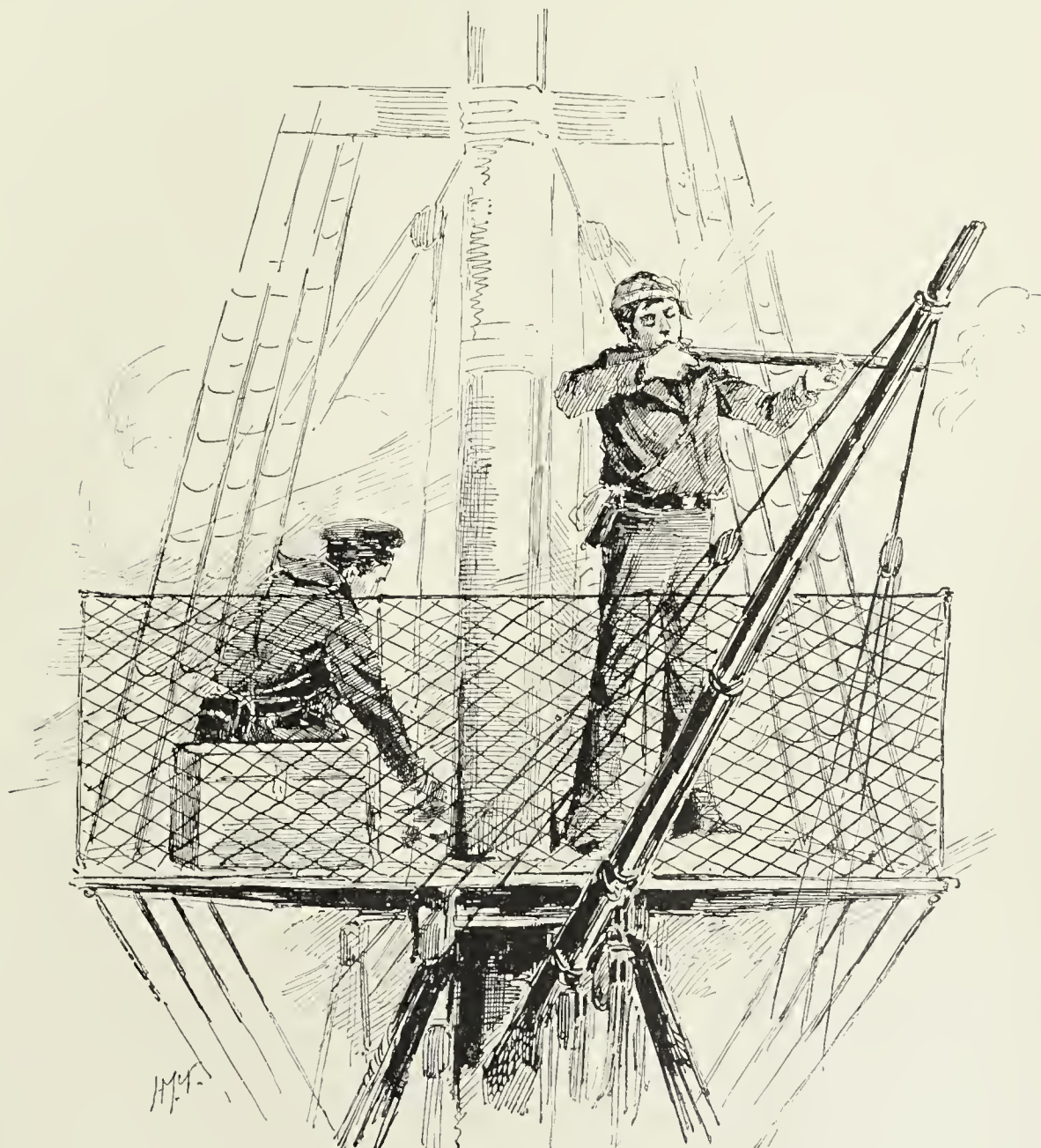
“Hard-a-port!” Bainbridge would shout from his station on the quarter-deck.



MARINES PICKING OFF THE ENEMY.

“Hard-a-port! Hard-a-port!” came the quick responses, as the midshipmen passed the word along. And so the ship was steered; and, notwithstanding the loss of her wheel, fairly out-manœuvred her antagonist.

The first raking broadside was delivered by the "Constitution," and did terrible execution along the gun-deck of the English ship. The two ships then ran before the wind, exchanging broadsides at a distance of half pistol-shot. At this game the American was clearly winning: so the Englishman determined to close and board, in the dashing, fearless way that had made the tars of Great Britain the terror of all maritime peoples. The frigate bore down on the "Constitution," and struck her on the quarter; the long jib-boom tearing its way through the rigging of the American ship. But, while this movement was being executed, the American gunners had not been idle; and the results of their labors were very evident, in the rigging of the "Java." Her jib-boom and bowsprit were so shattered by shot, that they were on the point of giving way; and, as the ships met, the mizzen-mast fell, crashing through fore-castle and main-deck, crushing officers and sailors beneath it in the fall, and hurling the topmen into the ocean to drown. The "Constitution" shot ahead, but soon wore and lay yard-arm to yard-arm with her foe. For some minutes the battle raged with desperation. A dense sulphurous smoke hung about the hulls of the two ships, making any extended vision impossible. Once in a while a fresher puff of wind, or a change in the position of the ships, would give the jackies a glimpse of their enemy, and show fierce faces glaring from the open ports, as the great guns were drawn in for loading. Then the gray pall of smoke fell, and nothing was to be seen but the carnage near at hand. The officers on the quarter-deck could better judge of the progress of the fray; and, the marines stationed there took advantage of every clear moment to pick off some enemy with a shot from one of their muskets. High up in the tops of the "Constitution" were two small howitzers, with which crews of topmen, under the command of midshipmen, made lively play with grape and canister upon the crowded decks of the enemy. From the cavernous submarine depths of the cock-pit and magazine, to the tops of each ship, not an idler was to be found. Chaplains, surgeons, clerks, cooks, and waiters—all were working or fighting for the honor of the flag under which they served.



IN THE CROSS-TREES.

Again the British determined to board; and the quick, sharp notes of the bugle calling up the boarders gave warning of their intentions. The men in the tops of the American frigate, looking down from their lofty

station, could see the crowd of boarders and marines gathered on the fore-castle and in the gang-ways, and could hear the shrill notes of the boatswain's whistle cheering them on. At that moment, however, the American fire raked the enemy with fearful effect, and the volleys of musketry from the marines and topmen made such havoc among the crowded boarders that the attempt was abandoned. The deadly fire of the Americans was not slackened. Capt. Lambert was struck down, mortally wounded; and the command fell upon Lieut. Chads, who, though himself badly wounded, continued the fight with true British courage. Over the side of the "Java" hung the wreck of her top-hamper, which every broad-side set on fire. Yet the British tars fought on, cheering lustily, and not once thinking of surrender, though they saw their fore-mast gone, their mizzen-mast shivered, even the last flag shot away, and the last gun silenced.

When affairs had reached this stage, the "Constitution," seeing no flag flying on the enemy, hauled away, and set about repairing her own damages. While thus engaged, the main-mast of the "Java" was seen to go by the board, and the ship lay a hopeless wreck upon the water. After making some slight repairs, Bainbridge returned to take possession of his prize, but, to his surprise, found a jack still floating over the helpless hulk. It was merely a bit of bravado, however; for, as the "Constitution" ranged up alongside, the jack was hauled down.

The "Java" proved to be a rich prize. She was one of the best of the English frigates, and had just been especially fitted up for the accommodation of the governor-general of Bombay and his staff, all of whom were then on board. This added to the regular number of officers and crew more than one hundred prisoners, mostly of high rank in British military and social circles.

The boarding officer found the ship so badly cut up that to save her was impossible. Her loss in men, including her captain Henry Lambert, and five midshipmen, was forty-eight, together with one hundred and five wounded, among whom were many officers. The "Constitution" had suffered much less severely, having but twelve killed and twenty wounded.

The ship herself was but little damaged; her chief injury being the loss of her wheel, which was immediately replaced by that of the "Java."

Capt. Bainbridge now found himself a great distance from home, with a disabled ship filled with prisoners, many of whom were wounded. Even had the wreck of the "Java" been less complete, it would have been hazardous to attempt to take her back to the United States through the West India waters that swarmed with British vessels. No course was open save to take the prisoners aboard the "Constitution," and set the torch to the disabled hulk.

To do this was a work of no little difficulty. The storm of lead and iron that had swept across the decks of the British frigate had left intact not one of the boats that hung from the davits. The "Constitution" had fared better; but, even with her, the case was desperate, for the British cannonade had left her but two serviceable boats. To transfer from the sinking ship to the victorious frigate nearly five hundred men, over a hundred of whom were wounded, was a serious task when the means of transfer were thus limited.

Three days the "Constitution" lay by her defeated enemy, and hour after hour the boats plied between the two ships. The first to be moved were the wounded. Tackle was rigged over the side of the "Java;" and the mangled sufferers, securely lashed in their hammocks, were gently lowered into the waiting boat, and soon found themselves in the sick-bay of the American ship, where they received the gentlest treatment from those who a few hours before sought only to slay them. The transfer of the wounded once accomplished, the work proceeded with great rapidity: and in the afternoon of the third day the "Constitution" was filled with prisoners; and the "Java," a deserted, shattered hulk, was ready for the last scene in the drama of her career.

The last boat left the desolate wreck, and, reaching the "Constitution," was hauled up to the davits. The side of the American frigate next to the abandoned ship was crowded with men, who looked eagerly across the water. Through the open port-holes of the "Java," a flickering gleam could be seen, playing fitfully upon the decks and gun-

carriages. The light grew brighter, and sharp-tongued flames licked the outside of the hull, and set the tangled cordage in a blaze. With this the whole ship seemed to burst into fire, and lay tossing, a huge ball of flame, on the rising sea. When the fire was raging most fiercely, there came a terrific explosion, and the great hull was lifted bodily from the water, falling back shattered into countless bits. Guns, anchors, and iron-work dragged the greater part of the wreckage to the bottom; and when the "Constitution," with all sail set, left the spot, the captive Englishmen, looking sadly back, could see only a patch of charred wood-work and cordage floating upon the ocean to mark the burial-place of the sturdy frigate "Java."

The "Constitution" made sail for San Salvador, where the prisoners were landed; first giving their paroles not to serve against the "United States" until regularly exchanged. Bainbridge then took his ship to Boston, where she arrived in February, 1813.

The substitution of the wheel of the "Java" for that of the "Constitution," shot away in battle, has been alluded to. In his biography of Capt. Bainbridge, Fenimore Cooper relates a story of interest regarding this trophy. It was a year or two after peace was made with England, in 1815, that a British naval officer visited the "Constitution," then lying at the Boston navy-yard. The frigate had been newly fitted out for a cruise to the Mediterranean; and an American officer, with some pride, showed the Englishman over the ship, which was then undoubtedly the finest of American naval vessels. After the tour of the ship had been made, the host said, as they stood chatting on the quarter-deck, —

"Well, what do you think of her?"

"She is one of the finest frigates, if not the very finest, I ever put my foot aboard of," responded the Englishman; "but, as I must find some fault, I'll just say that your wheel is one of the clumsiest things I ever saw, and is unworthy of the vessel."

The American officer laughed.

"Well, you see," said he, "when the 'Constitution' took the 'Java,' the former's wheel was shot out of her. The 'Java's' wheel was fitted



THE LAST OF THE JAVA.

on the victorious frigate, to steer by; and, although we think it as ugly as you do, we keep it as a trophy."

All criticisms on the wheel ended then and there.

The defeat of the "Java" closed the warfare on the ocean during 1812. The year ended with the honors largely in the possession of the United States navy. The British could boast of the capture of but two armed vessels,—the "Nautilus," whose capture by an overwhelming force we have already noted; and the little brig "Vixen," twelve guns, which Sir James Yeo, with the "Southampton," thirty-two, had overhauled and captured in the latter part of November. The capture of the "Wasp" by the "Poitiers," when the American sloop-of-war was cut up by her action with the "Frolic," was an occurrence, which, however unfortunate for the Americans, reflected no particular honor upon the British arms.

In opposition to this record, the Americans could boast of victory in four hard-fought battles. In no case had they won through any lack of valor on the part of their antagonists; for the Englishmen had not sought to avoid the battle, and had fought with the dogged valor characteristic of their nation. In one or two instances, it is true that the Americans were more powerful than the foe whom they engaged; but, in such cases, the injury inflicted was out of all proportion to the disparity in size of the combatants. The four great actions resulting in the defeat of the "Guerriere," the "Frolic," the "Macedonian," and the "Java," showed conclusively that the American blue-jackets were equal in courage to their British opponents, and far their superiors in coolness, skill, discipline, and self-reliance; and these qualities may be said to have won the laurels for the American navy that were conceded to it by all impartial observers.

Besides the victories over the four British ships enumerated, the Americans had captured the "Alert," and a British transport bearing a considerable detachment of troops. These achievements, as involving no bloodshed, may be set off against the captures of the "Nautilus" and "Vixen" by the British. Of the number of British merchant-vessels captured, the records are so incomplete that no accurate estimate can be

made. To the naval vessels are accredited forty-six captures among the enemy's merchant-marine, and this estimate is probably very nearly accurate. But with the declaration of war, Portsmouth, Salem, New London, New York, Baltimore, and, indeed, every American seaport, fitted out fleet privateers to prey upon the enemy's commerce. The sails of this private armed navy fairly whitened the sea, and few nights were not illuminated by the flames of some burning prize. As their chief object was plunder, the aim of the privateers was to get their prize safely into port; but, when this was impossible, they were not slow in applying the torch to the captured vessel. The injury they inflicted upon the enemy was enormous, and the record of their exploits might well engage the industry of painstaking historians. As an adjunct to the regular navy, they were of great service in bringing the war to a happy conclusion.

It is not to be supposed that the British men-of-war and privateers were idle while the Americans were thus sweeping the seas. More than one American vessel set sail boldly from some little New England port, freighted with the ventures of all classes of tradesmen, only to be snapped up by a rapacious cruiser. But the mercantile marine of the United States was but small, and offered no such rewards to enterprising privateers as did the goodly fleets of West-Indiamen that bore the flag of Great Britain. And so, while the American privateers were thriving and reaping rich rewards of gold and glory, those of the British were gradually abandoning privateering in disgust. The American prize-lists grew so large, that the newspapers commenced the practice of publishing weekly a list of the enemy's ships taken during the week past. In Baltimore, Henry Niles, in his paper "The Weekly Register," robbed "The London Naval Chronicle" of its vainglorious motto, —

"The winds and seas are Britain's broad domain,
And not a sail but by permission spreads."

This sentiment Niles printed at the head of his weekly list of British vessels captured by United States vessels, — a bit of satire not often equalled in the columns of newspapers of to-day.



CHAPTER VII.

THE WAR ON THE LAKES.—THE ATTACK ON SACKETT'S HARBOR.—OLIVER HAZARD PERRY ORDERED TO LAKE ERIE.—THE BATTLE OF PUT-IN-BAY.

LET us now abandon for a time our consideration of the progress of the great naval war on the ocean, and turn our attention to a humbler theatre, in which the drama of battle was proceeding with no less credit to the American participants, though with less grand and inspiring accessories. On the great fresh-water lakes which skirt the northern frontier of the United States, the two warring powers contended fiercely for the mastery. But there were no desperate duels between well-matched frigates; nor, indeed, did either the British or American squadron of the lake station boast a craft of sufficient armament to be termed a frigate, until the war was nearly at an end. Barges, gunboats, sloops, schooners, and brigs made up the squadrons that fought for the possession of the fresh-water seas; and few either of the jackies of the fore-castle or the officers of the quarter-deck were bred to the regular service. With such forces it could only happen that the

encounters of the foes should be little more than skirmishes, and that neither in immediate loss of life nor in direct results should these skirmishes be important. Such, in fact, was the general character of the hostilities on the lakes, with two noteworthy exceptions, — Perry's victory at Put-in-Bay, and McDonough's successful resistance of the British on Lake Champlain.

That the war should invade the usually peaceful waters of Ontario, Erie, and Champlain, was inevitable from the physical characteristics of the northern frontier of the United States. Great Britain held Canada; and an invasion of her enemy's territory from that province was a military measure, the advisability of which was evident to the most untaught soldier. No overland expedition could hope to make its way through the dense forests of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, or the Adirondack region of New York. But the lakes offered a tempting opening for invasion. Particularly did the placid, navigable waters of Lake Champlain, stretching from the Canada line far into the heart of New York, invite the invader; while Lakes Erie and Ontario afforded an opportunity for attacking the Americans on what was then, practically, their western frontier.

The Americans were not slow in perceiving the dangers that threatened their north-western frontier, and began to prepare for its defence most energetically at the first declaration of war. It was a work that taxed to the utmost the resources of the young country. The shores of the lakes as far west as Detroit were open to the attacks of the enemy, and, although part of the territory of the United States, were really more accessible to the invaders than to the American defenders. The population was sparse, and the means of transportation very primitive. Before the days of railroads, canals, or even well-kept turnpikes, troops, seamen, ordnance, and all munitions of war could only be transported from the cities on the seacoast by the most laborious hauling over roads hardly worthy of the name. Nor was the transportation problem solved during the continuance of the war. When in May, 1814, the new United States frigate "Superior" lay at her dock at Sackett's Harbor, her ordnance,

stores, and cordage had to be brought from Oswego Falls, some fifty miles away. A clear water-route by the Oswego River and the lake offered itself; but Sir James Yeo, with his squadron, was blockading the mouth of the harbor, and the chance for blockade-runners was small indeed. To carry the heavy ordnance and cables overland, was out of the question. The dilemma was most perplexing, but Yankee ingenuity finally enabled the "Superior" to get her outfit. The equipment was loaded upon a small fleet of barges and scows, which a veteran lake captain took to a point sixteen miles from the blockaded harbor. By sailing by night, and skulking up creeks and inland water-ways, the transports reached this point without attracting the attention of the blockading fleet. They had, however, hardly arrived when news of the enterprise came to the ears of the British, and an expedition was sent to intercept the Americans, which expedition the Yankees successfully resisted. The question then arose as to how the stores were to be taken across the sixteen miles of marsh and forest that lay between the boats and the navy-yard at Sackett's Harbor. The cannon and lighter stores were transported on heavy carts with great difficulty, but there still remained the great cable. How to move this was a serious question. No cart could bear its ponderous weight of ninety-six hundred pounds. Again Yankee ingenuity and pluck came to the rescue. Two hundred men volunteered to carry the great rope on their shoulders, and in this way it actually was transported. Along the shore of the little creek the great cable was stretched out with prodigious labor, and lay there looking like a gigantic serpent. The two hundred men ranged themselves along the line at regular intervals, and at a given signal hoisted the burden to their shoulders. At the word of command, all stepped off briskly together, and the long line wound along the narrow path through the forests. They started out cheerily enough, enlivening the work with songs and jests; but at the end of the first mile all were glad enough to throw down the load, and loiter a while by the roadside. A few minutes' rest, and up and on again. Now arms began to ache, and shoulders to chafe, under the unusual burden; but the march continued until noon of the next day, when the footsore and weary

carriers marched proudly into Sackett's Harbor, to find sailors and soldiers assembled to greet them with bands and cannon-firing. In accordance with the custom of the time, these demonstrations of honor were supplemented by the opening of a barrel of whiskey, in honor of the arrival of the cable.

This incident, trivial in itself, is typical of that ingenuity and fertility of resource, which, more than any thing else, contributed to the success of the Americans, not only in the lake operations of the war of 1812, but in every war the nation has since undertaken. But the advantages gained by Yankee enterprise and ingenuity were, perhaps, more evident in the operations on Lake Ontario and Lake Erie than in the operations of the armies, or of the fleets upon the ocean. The great contest lay more in the rapid building of ships than in fighting them. At the outset the enemy were better equipped for the struggle than were the Americans. The Canadian frontier had been longer settled, and could lend more men to the needs of the nation. More than this, the route to the ocean by the St. Lawrence River made it really easier to transport naval stores from far-off Liverpool to the British naval station on the shores of Lake Ontario, than to carry like goods across the wooded hills of New York. Nor were the British altogether without naval resources upon the lakes at the hour when war was declared. On Lake Erie the English flag waved over the "Royal George," twenty-two; "Prince Regent," sixteen; "Earl of Moira," fourteen; "Gloucester," ten; "Seneca," eight; and "Simcoe," eight. Opposed to this squadron was but one United States vessel,—the "Oneida," a man-of-war brig carrying sixteen twenty-four-pound carronades. On Lake Erie the British had a squadron of six vessels, carrying in all forty-six guns.

Hostilities opened early on Lake Ontario. For some time before the formal declaration of war, a desultory warfare had been waged by the Americans and Canadians about Niagara. Canadian schooners had been seized on account of alleged violations of the revenue and embargo regulations of the United States. The resentment of the sufferers was aroused, and they only awaited a suitable opportunity to retaliate. The opportunity

soon came, in the form of the declaration of war; and a body of Canadian volunteers attacked eight American schooners, near the Thousand Isles, and burned two of them.

With the opening of the war, the United States authorities had fixed upon Sackett's Harbor as the naval station for Lake Ontario. In the harbor, on the 19th of July, 1812, lay the "Oneida," which had lately come into port after a short cruise in search of British schooners. At early dawn of the day mentioned, the lookout reported five ships in the offing, and a few minutes later hailed the deck, to report them to be British ships-of-war. The alarm quickly spread over the little town. Puny though the British fleet would have appeared upon the ocean, it was of ample power to take the "Oneida" and destroy the village. Before the villagers fairly understood their peril, a small boat came scudding into the harbor before the wind. It bore a message from the British commander, demanding that the "Oneida" and the "Lord Nelson" (a captured Canadian vessel) be surrendered. Should the squadron be resisted, he warned the inhabitants that their town should be burned to the ground.

Commander Woolsey, who commanded the "Oneida," was a United States officer of the regular service, and a man of courage and fertility of resource. Unable to take his vessel out into the lake, he moored her at the entrance of the harbor in such a way that her broadside of nine guns might be brought to bear on the enemy. All hands then set to work getting the other broadside battery ashore; and, by the aid of the villagers, these guns were mounted on a hastily thrown up redoubt on the shore. At the foot of the main street of the village was planted a queerly assorted battery. The great gun, on which the hopes of the Americans centred, was an iron thirty-two-pounder, which had lain for years deeply embedded in the muddy ooze of the lake-shore, gaining thereby the derisive name of the "Old Sow." This redoubtable piece of ordnance was flanked on either side by a brass six-pounder; a pair of cannon that the Yankee sailors had, with infinite pains and indomitable perseverance, dredged up from the sunken hulk of a British war-vessel

that had filled a watery grave some years. Two brass nine-pounders completed this novel armament.

It was about eight o'clock in the morning when the British vessels came up within range. Alarm guns had been firing from the shore all the morning; and by that time the village was filled with militia-men, who flocked to the scene of action. Woolsey, who had taken charge of the shore-batteries, ordered a shot from the thirty-two pounder. The "old sow" spoke out bravely, but the shot missing, only roused the enemy to laughter, which could be heard on shore. The British vessels then began a vigorous cannonade, keeping well out of range of the small guns on shore; although so weak were the American defences, that a vigorous onslaught by the enemy would have quickly reduced the town to submission. As it was, a harmless fire was kept up for about two hours. Not a shot took effect, and nothing save the noise and excitement of the cannonading need have deterred the good people of Sackett's Harbor from observing that Sunday morning in accordance with their usual sabbath customs. It was reserved for one shot to put an end to this strange engagement. Just as the artillerists who served the iron thirty-two pounder were loading the gun, a cannon-ball struck the ground near the battery. One of the Americans ran, and, picking up the spent ball, brought it into the battery, saying, "I've been playing ball with the red-coats, and have caught them out. Let's see now if they can catch back again." So saying, he rammed the missile down the muzzle of the long thirty-two, and sent it back with deadly aim. The captured ball crashed into the stern of the "Royal George," raked her from stem to stern, killing fourteen men, and wounding eighteen in its course. The marksman, watching the course of his shot, saw the splinters fly from the deck of the British ship; and the Americans cheered loudly for the "old sow" as the British squadron put about, and left the Sackett's Harbor people to celebrate their easily won victory.

Insignificant though this engagement was, it was the chief battle of the year on Lake Ontario. The Americans strained every nerve to put more armed vessels afloat, and, being left unmolested by the British,

managed to have quite a flotilla in commission before winter set its icy seal upon the lake. In September, Capt. Isaac Chauncey was appointed commander-in-chief of the lake navy; and, on his arrival, he proved himself the very man for the place. He rushed ahead the building of new ships, arranged for the transportation of seamen from the seacoast to man the vessels on the lakes, and then, not content with attending only to the building of the ships, took command of the squadron in commission, and fairly swept the lake clear of the enemy's vessels. He met with little opposition as the British retired to their naval station at Kingston, remaining there until all further naval operations were checked by the ice.

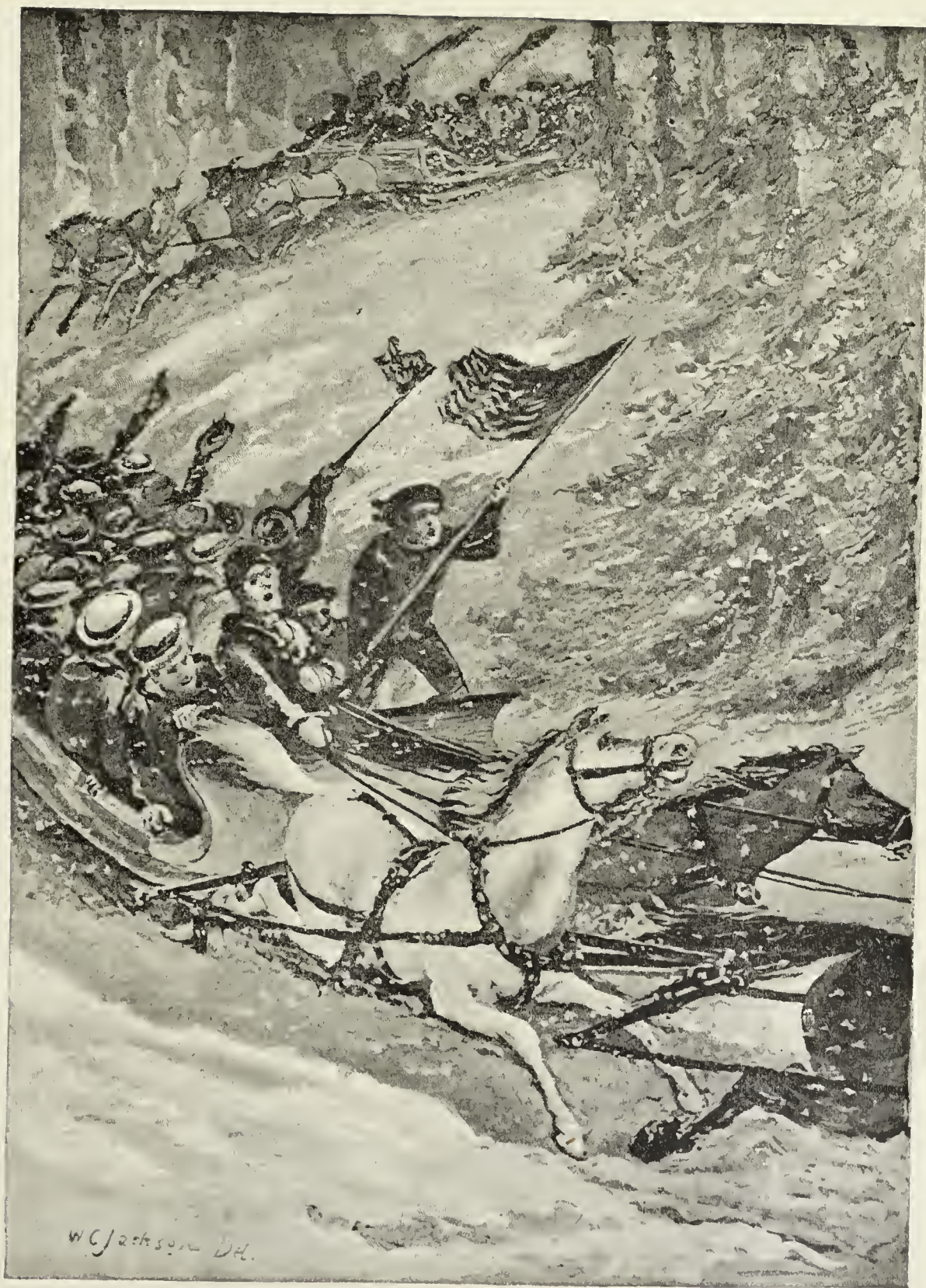
Winter, which seriously impeded the work of the British by putting an end to navigation upon the St. Lawrence, did away with many of the difficulties of transportation which had so hampered the Americans. The roads to the seacoast grew hard, and were soon covered with snow, over which long teams of oxen plodded to and fro until the path was well broken. Then began the hauling of supplies from the seaboard. From his post at Sackett's Harbor, Chauncey sent out requisitions for ship-timber, cordage, ordnance, and ship-carpenters. Long trains of heavily laden wagons and sledges wound their way across the State from New York or Albany to the station at Sackett's Harbor. Agents were appointed in the seacoast towns to enlist seamen for service on the lakes,—a work that required no small powers of persuasion; for the true salt-water jack looks with great disfavor upon the "fish-ponds" of fresh water. But, by dint of munificent offers of bounties and prize-money, several hundred sailors were induced to leave their ships on the ocean, and take service in the infant navy of the lakes.

Most of the sailors were sent across the State in the dead of winter. The trip was made in huge sleds, drawn by several pairs of horses, and carrying a score or more men each. The jackies enlivened the journey with rollicking songs and stories as the sleds sped over the well-packed roads through the sparsely settled country. One of the largest parties was accompanied by a brass band, with the aid of which the sailors made

their entrance to the villages along the road in truly royal style. The sleighs and horses were gayly decked with the national colors. The band led in the first sleigh, closely followed by three other sledges, filled with blue-coated men. Before the little tavern of the town the *cortège* usually came to a halt; and the tars, descending, followed up their regulation cheers with demands for grog and provender. After a halt of an hour or two, the party continued its way, followed by the admiration of every villager, and the envy of every boy large enough to have seafaring ambitions.

With all his energy and unswerving fidelity to the cause of his country, Chauncey probably did nothing of more direct benefit to the United States than writing a letter to a young naval officer, then stationed at Newport, asking him to come West and take charge of the naval operations on Lake Erie. The name of this young officer was Oliver Hazard Perry, and a year later no name in American history carried with it more fame.

Hostilities on Lake Erie had been unimportant up to the time that Chauncey sent for Perry. The Americans had no naval vessel to oppose to the fleet of Canadian craft that held the lake. One war-vessel only had shown the American flag on the lake; and she had been fitted out by the army, and had fallen into the hands of the enemy at the surrender of Detroit. But this prize was not destined to remain long in the hands of the Canadians. Early in the autumn of 1812, Chauncey had sent Lieut. Elliott to Lake Erie, with instructions to begin at once the creation of a fleet by building or purchasing vessels. Elliott chose as the site of his improvised navy-yard Black Rock, a point two miles below Buffalo; and there pushed ahead his work in a way that soon convinced the enemy, that, unless the young officer's energy received a check, British supremacy on Lake Erie would soon be at an end. Accordingly, two armed brigs, the "Caledonia" and the "Detroit," recently captured by the British, came down to put an end to the Yankee ship-building. Like most of the enemy's vessels on the lakes, these two brigs were manned by Canadians, and had not even the advantage of a regular naval commander.



SAILORS BOUND FOR THE LAKES.

On the morning of the 8th of October, the sentries on the river-side at Black Rock discovered the two British vessels lying at anchor under the guns of Fort Erie, a British work on the opposite side of the Niagara River, that there flows placidly along, a stream more than a mile wide. Zealous for distinction, and determined to checkmate the enemy in their design, Elliott resolved to undertake the task of cutting out the two vessels from beneath the guns of the British fort. Fortune favored his enterprise. It happened that on that very day a detachment of sailors from the ocean had arrived at Black Rock. Though wearied by their long overland journey, the jackies were ready for the adventure, but had no weapons. In this dilemma Elliott was forced to turn for aid to the military authorities, from whom he obtained pistols, swords, and sabres enough to fit out his sailors for the fray. With the arms came a number of soldiers and a small party of adventurous citizens, all of whom enlisted under the leadership of the adventurous Elliott. In planning the expedition, the great difficulty lay in getting rid of the too numerous volunteers.

By nightfall, the preparations for the expedition were completed. In the underbrush that hung over the banks of the river, two large boats were concealed, ready for the embarkation. At midnight fifty men, armed to the teeth, silently took their places in each of the great barges, and pushed out upon the black surface of the river. All along the bank were crowds of eager watchers, who discussed the chances of success with bated breath, lest the merest whisper should alarm the British sentries on the farther shore. With steady strokes of the muffled oars, the two boats made their way toward the two brigs that could just be seen outlined against the sky. Elliott, in the first boat, directed the movements of his men, and restrained the too enthusiastic. So stealthy was the approach, that the foremost boat was fairly alongside of the "Detroit" before the British took the alarm. Then the quick hail of the sentry brought an answering pistol-shot from Elliott; and, amid volleys of musketry, the assailants clambered up the sides of the brigs, and with pistol and cutlass drove the startled crew below. So complete was the surprise, that the British made but little resistance; and the cables of the brigs

were cut, sails spread, and the vessels under way, before the thunder of a gun from Fort Erie told that the British on shore had taken the alarm.

At the report of the first shot fired, the dark line of the American shore suddenly blazed bright with huge beacon fires, while lanterns and torches were waved from commanding points to guide the adventurous sailors in their navigation of the captured brigs. But the victors were not to escape unscathed with their booty. The noise of the conflict, and the shouts of the Americans on the distant bank of the river, roused the British officers in the fort, and the guns were soon trained on the receding vessels. Some field-batteries galloped along the bank, and soon had their guns in a position whence they could pour a deadly fire upon the Americans. Nor did the spectators on the New York side of the river escape unharmed; for the first shot fired by the field-battery missed the brigs, but crossed the river and struck down an American officer. Almost unmanageable in the swift current and light wind, the two brigs seemed for a time in danger of recapture. The "Caledonia" was run ashore under the guns of an American battery; but the "Detroit," after being relieved of the prisoners, and deserted by her captors, was beached at a point within range of the enemy's fire. The British made several determined attempts to recapture her, but were beaten off; and, after a day's fighting around the vessel, she was set on fire and burned to the water's edge. The "Caledonia," however, remained to the Americans, and some months later did good service against her former owners.

It was shortly after this occurrence that Lieut. Perry offered his services for the lakes; and four months later he received a letter from Chauncey, saying, "You are the very person that I want for a particular service, in which you may gain reputation for yourself, and honor for your country." This letter was quickly followed by orders from the Secretary of the Navy to report at once for duty to Chauncey at Sackett's Harbor. Perry was overjoyed. The dull monotony of his duties at Newport suited little his ardent nature. He longed for active service, and an opportunity to win distinction. His opportunity had at last come; and twenty hours after the receipt of his orders, he and his thirteen-

year-old brother were seated in a sleigh and fairly started on the long drive across the country. Travelling was a serious matter in those days, and the journey from Newport to Sackett's Harbor required twelve days.

On his arrival, Perry found that the special service for which he was needed was the command of a naval force on Lake Erie. He stopped but a short time at Sackett's Harbor, and then pressed on to Erie, the base of the naval operations on the lake of the same name. It was late in March when Perry arrived; and the signs of spring already showed that soon the lake would be clear of ice, and the struggle for its control recommence. The young lieutenant was indefatigable in the labor of preparation. He urged on the building of vessels already begun. He arranged for the purchase of merchant schooners, and their conversion into gunboats. He went to Pittsburg for supplies, and made a flying trip to Buffalo to join Chauncey in an attack upon Fort George at the mouth of the Niagara River. All the time, he managed to keep up a constant fire of letters to the Secretary of the Navy and to Chauncey, begging for more sailors. By summertime, he had five vessels ready for service, but no men to man them. The enemy blockaded him, and he dared not accept the challenge. In July he wrote to Chauncey: "The enemy's fleet of six sail are now off the bar of this harbor. What a golden opportunity if we had men! . . . Give me men, sir, and I will acquire both for you and myself honor and glory on this lake, or perish in the attempt." Again he wrote: "For God's sake, and yours and mine, send me men and officers; and I will have them all [the British squadron] in a day or two." When the men finally did arrive, he was much disgusted with their appearance, pronouncing them to be "a motley set, — blacks, soldiers, and boys." Nevertheless, this same motley crew, headed by the critical young officer, won a victory that effectually crushed the pretensions of the enemy to the control of Lake Erie.

His crews having arrived, Perry was anxious to get out upon the lake, and engage the enemy at once. But this course of action was for a long time impossible. The flotilla lay snugly anchored within the

harbor of Erie, the entrance to which was closed by a bar. To cross this bar, the ships would have been obliged to send all heavy ordnance ashore; and, as the enemy kept close watch outside the harbor, the



PERRY'S RECRUITS.

American fleet was practically blockaded. For several weeks the Americans were thus kept prisoners, grumbling mightily at their enforced inaction, and longing for a chance to get at the enemy. One morning in August word was brought to Perry that the blockading fleet had disappeared. Instantly all was life and bustle in the harbor. The crews

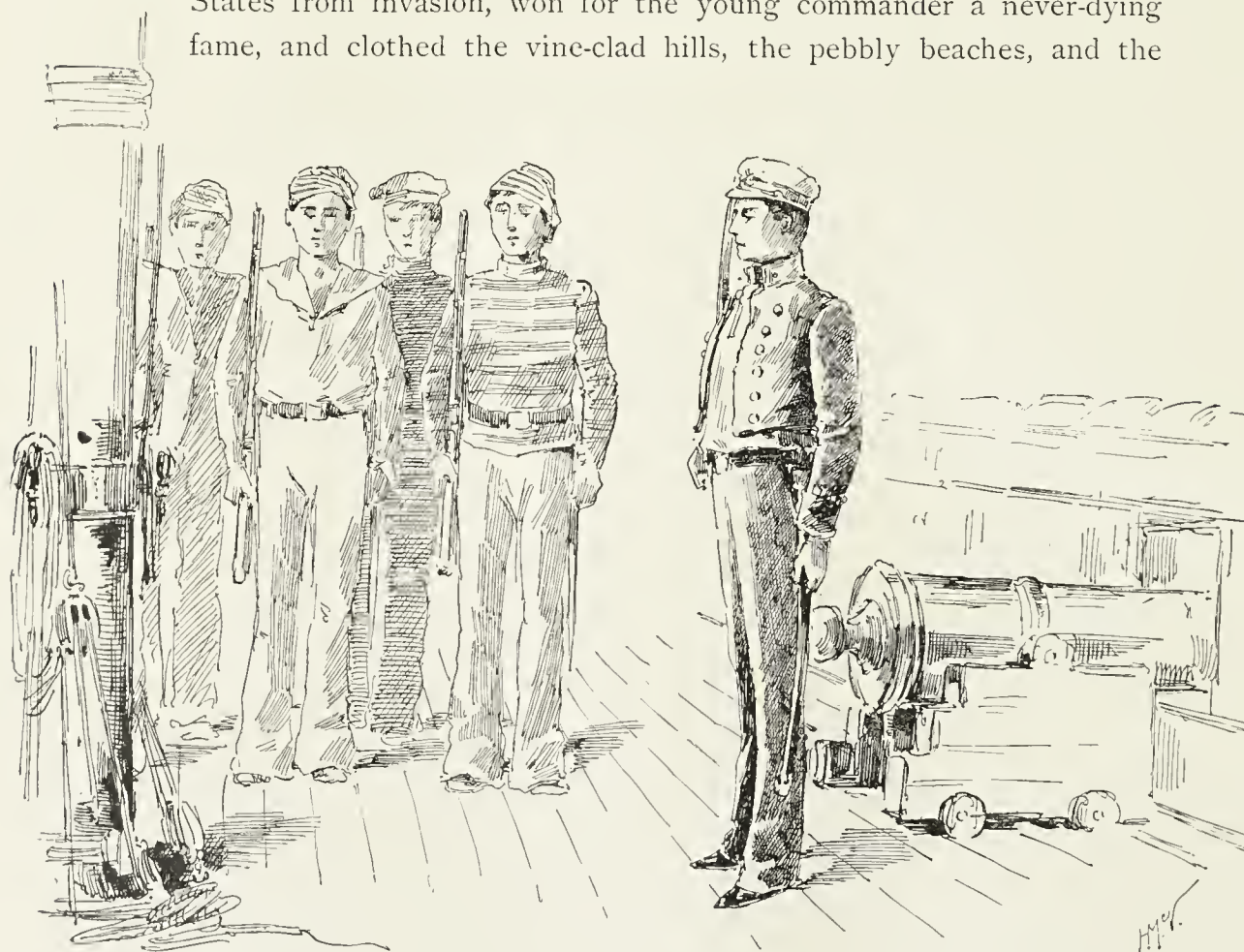
of all the vessels were ordered aboard; and the flotilla dropped down to the bar, intending to cross early in the morning. At dawn the movement was begun. The schooners and other small craft were easily taken outside; but, when it came to the turn of the two gun-brigs, "Lawrence" and "Niagara," it became evident that mechanical assistance was required. Accordingly, a powerful "camel" was hastily improvised, by the aid of which the two vessels were dragged across the bar. Hardly had the second brig made the passage in safety, when the British fleet appeared in the offing. Tradition says that the opportune absence of the enemy's fleet was caused by a public banquet to which the citizens of Port Dover had invited Commodore Barclay and his officers. While the dinner was going merrily on, the Americans were hard at work, escaping from the trap in which the British had left them. In responding to a toast at the banquet, Barclay said, "I expect to find the Yankee brigs hard and fast on the bar at Erie when I return, in which predicament it will be but a small job to destroy them." His anticipations were not realized; for, on his arrival, he found the entire squadron safely floating in the deep water outside the bar.

Had Barclay but known it, he would even then have found it "but a small job to destroy them;" for the two brigs, having been stripped of their ordnance, would have been easy prey for the British squadron. But Perry's bold action in sending forward two schooners to engage the enemy seemed to alarm the too prudent commodore; and the British bore away, and were soon out of sight.

By night Perry's flotilla was in readiness for cruising, and set out immediately in pursuit of the foe. Barclay seemed to avoid the conflict; and, after some weeks' cruising, the Americans cast anchor at Put-in-Bay, and awaited there the appearance of the enemy.

The little flotilla that lay anchored on the placid waters of the picturesque bay consisted of nine vessels, ranging in size from the "Trippe," a puny sloop carrying one gun, to the "Lawrence" and "Niagara," brigs carrying each two long twelves and eighteen short thirty-twos. No very formidable armada was that of a handful of pygmy vessels, commanded by

a young officer who had never heard the thunderous cannonade of a naval battle, or seen the decks of his ships stained with the blood of friends and daily companions. Yet the work of the little squadron saved the United States from invasion, won for the young commander a never-dying fame, and clothed the vine-clad hills, the pebbly beaches, and the



DRILLING THE RAW RECRUITS.

crystal waters of Put-in-Bay with a wealth of proud, historical associations.

Day after day the vessels lay idly at their anchorage, and the sailors grew restless at the long inactivity. Perry alone was patient; for to him had come the knowledge that the hostile fleet was getting short of supplies, and would soon be starved out of its retreat at Malden. Knowing this, he spared no pains to get his men into training for the coming con-

flict. They were exercised daily at the great guns, and put through severe drills in the use of the cutlass, in boarding, and repelling boarders. By constant drill and severe discipline, Perry had made of the motley crew sent him a well-drilled body of seamen, every man of whom had become fired with the enthusiasm of his commander.

As the time passed, and the day of battle drew nearer, Perry's confidence in his men increased; and he looked upon the coming conflict as one certain to bring glory to his country. At early dawn the jackies on the ships could see the slender form of their commander perched upon the craggy heights of one of the islands, called to this day "Perry's Lookout," eagerly scanning the horizon in the direction of Malden. On the night of Sept. 9, 1813, the commodore felt convinced that on the next day the British would come out to battle. Accordingly, a conference of captains was called in the cabin of the flag-ship, and each received directions as to his course of action during the fight. They were urged to force the fighting to close quarters. Said Perry, "Nelson has expressed my idea in the words, 'If you lay your enemy alongside, you cannot be out of your place.'" As the officers were about to depart, Perry drew from a locker a large, square blue flag, on which appeared, in white letters, the dying words of the gallant Lawrence, "DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP!" "This," said Perry, "shall be the signal for action; and when it appears at the masthead, remember your instructions." The conference then ended; and the captains returned to their ships across the bay, silvered by the light of the moon, to spend the greater part of the night in preparations for the great danger of the coming day.

Morning dawned bright and clear, with a light breeze blowing, that broke into ripples the surface of the land-locked bay. The rosy light of the rising sun was just reddening the eastern horizon, when, from the lookout in the foretop of the "Lawrence," came the long-drawn hail of "Sail, ho!" quickly repeated from the other vessels.

Perry was already on deck. "What does it look like?" he shouted to the lookout.

"A clump of square rigged, and fore and afters, sir," was the response.

In a few minutes the signals "Enemy in sight," and "Get under way," were flying from the masthead of the flag-ship; and the merry piping of the boatswains' whistles, and the measured tramp of the sailors around the capstans, told that signals were observed, and were being obeyed.

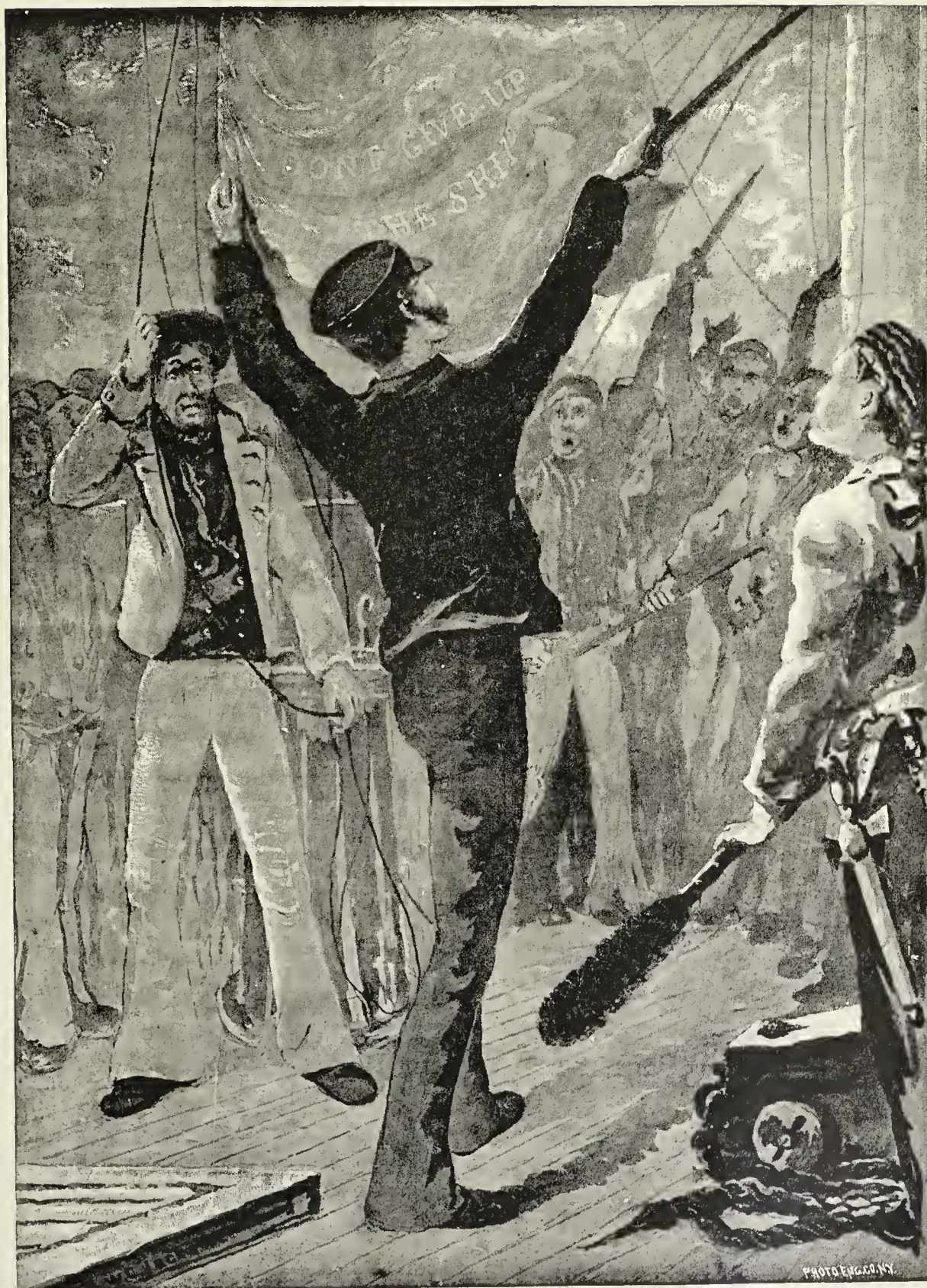
The fleet was soon threading its way through the narrow channels, filled with islands, at the entrance to the bay, and finally came into line on the open lake. Not a cloud was in the sky. The lake was calm, with enough wind blowing to admit of manœuvring, yet gentle enough to be of advantage to the schooners that made up the greater part of each fleet.

For some time the Americans held back, manœuvring to get the weather-gauge; but Perry's impatience for the fray got the better of his caution, and he determined to close at once. His first officer remonstrated, saying, "Then you'll have to engage the enemy to leeward."

"I don't care," responded the commodore. "Leeward or windward, they shall fight to-day." Then, turning to the quartermaster, he called for the battle-flag, which being brought, he mustered the crew aft, and addressed them briefly, telling them of the task before them, and urging them to fight bravely for the victory. "My brave lads," he concluded, "this flag bears the last words of Capt. Lawrence. Shall I hoist it?"

"Ay, ay, sir!" cried the jackies, in unison; and, as the flag was swiftly run to the masthead, the cheers of the sailors on the deck of the "Lawrence" were echoed from the neighboring vessels, as the white letters showed boldly against the blue flag, bearing to each commander the exhortation, "Don't give up the ship!"

The battle-signal being thus displayed, the vessels moved onward to the attack. As the crew of the "Lawrence" stood at their guns, the cooks passed along the decks, handing to each man a bit of food, that his strength might not leave him in the coming struggle. Then followed boys with boxes of sand, which they strewed upon the decks, to afford a firm foothold for the men at the guns. The hammocks were stowed along the nettings, to serve as some little protection against flying shot. The men stood silent and pale at their quarters, each occupied with his



BEFORE THE BATTLE.

own grave thoughts, but all determined to fight like brave men and true for the honor of the flag. By Perry's side stood his brother, a boy thirteen years old, armed and ready to do his duty as well as the older men.

The British came on gallantly. Barclay had lost all his diffidence, and brought up his vessels like a veteran. His ships were kept close together; the ship "Detroit" under short sail, that the pygmy sloop "Little Belt" might not be left in the rear. The Americans came down in single file, headed by the schooner "Scorpion." Suddenly through the still air rang out the sharp notes of a bugle-call on the enemy's flag-ship. It was the signal for action; and, as the last notes died away, the bands struck up "Rule, Britannia." The Americans answered with cheers; and in the midst of the cheering, a jet of smoke and fire spurted from the side of the "Detroit," and a heavy shot splashed into the water near the "Lawrence," while a dull, heavy report came booming over the water.

The battle was opened, but five minutes elapsed before a second shot was fired. When it did come, it crashed through the bulwarks of the "Lawrence," and sped across her deck, doing no great damage. "Steady, lads, steady," cried Perry, from his post on the quarter-deck, as he saw an uneasy stir among his men, who longed to return the fire. The commodore was determined to fight at close quarters, and hung out signals for each ship to choose its antagonist, and fight the fight out for itself.

It was then high noon, and the battle soon became general. The little schooners "Scorpion" and "Ariel" pluckily kept their place in the van of the American line, but the fire of the enemy fell most fiercely upon the flag-ship "Lawrence." No less than four vessels at one time were grouped about the "Lawrence," pouring in a destructive fire, and bent upon destroying the flag-ship and her brave commander; then taking the smaller vessels in detail. The "Lawrence" fought bravely, but the odds were too great. The carronades with which she was armed were no match for the long guns of her adversaries. For two hours the unequal combat raged, and no American vessel came to the aid of the sorely smitten flag-ship. Amid the hail of cannon-balls and bullets, Perry

seemed to bear a charmed life. He saw his officers and men falling all about him. John Brooks, the lieutenant of marines, fought by the com-



COMMODORE PERRY AT THE BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE.

modore's side. While speaking cheerfully to the commodore, a cannon-ball struck the young lieutenant on the hip, dashing him across the deck against the bulwark, and mutilating him so, that he plead piteously with Perry, imploring that he might be put out of his misery with a pistol-shot. From this awful spectacle Perry turned to speak to the captain of a gun, when the conversation was abruptly cut short by a shot which killed the seaman instantly. Perry returned to the quarter-deck. The first lieutenant came rushing up, his face bloody, and his nose swelled to an enormous size, from a splinter which had perforated it. "All the officers in my division are killed," he cried. "For God's sake, give me more!" Perry sent some men to his aid; but they soon fell, and the cry

for more men arose again. One of the surgeons who served in the cockpit on that dreadful day states, that, in the midst of the roar of battle, Perry's voice was heard calling down the hatchway, and asking any

surgeons' mates who could be spared, to come on deck and help work the guns. Several went up; but the appeal was soon repeated, and more responded. When no more men could be obtained, the voice of the commodore took a pleading tone. "Can any of the wounded pull a rope?" said he; and such was his ascendancy over the men, that several poor mangled fellows dragged themselves on deck, and lent their feeble strength to the working of the guns.

Amid all the carnage, the sailors were quick to notice the lighter incidents of the fray. Even the cock-pit, filled with the wounded, and reeking with blood that dripped through the cracks in the deck above, once resounded with laughter as hearty as ever greeted a middy's after-dinner joke in the steerage. Lieut. Yarnall received a bad scalp-wound, which fairly drenched his face with blood. As he groped his way towards the cock-pit, he passed a lot of hammocks stuffed with "cat-tails" which had been stowed on the bulwarks. The feathery down of the "cat-tails" filled the air, and settled thick upon the head and face of the officer, robbing his countenance of all semblance to a human face. As he descended the ladder to the cock-pit, his owl-like air roused the wounded to great shouts of laughter. "The Devil has come among us," they cried.

While talking to his little brother, Perry to his horror saw the lad fall at his feet, dashed to the deck by an unseen missile. The commodore's agony may be imagined; but it was soon assuaged, for the boy was only stunned, and was soon fighting again at his post. The second lieutenant was struck by a spent grape-shot, and fell stunned upon the deck. He lay there for a time, unnoticed. Perry raised him up, telling him he was not hurt, as no blood could be seen. The lieutenant put his hand to his clothing, at the point where the blow had fallen, and discovered the shot lodged in his coat. Coolly putting it in his pocket, he remarked, "You are right: I am not hurt. But this is my shot," and forthwith returned to his duty.

It was a strange-looking body of men that fought at the guns of the "Lawrence." Lean, angular Yankee sailors from the seafaring commu-

nities of New England stood by the side of swarthy negroes, who, with their half-naked black bodies, in the dense powder-smoke, seemed like fiends in pandemonium. In the rigging were stationed a number of Kentucky riflemen, who had volunteered to serve during the battle. The buckskin shirts and leggings gave an air of incongruity to their presence on a man-of-war. Their unerring rifles, however, did brave service for the cause of the stars and stripes. At the opening of the action, two tall Indians, decked in all the savage finery of war-paint and feathers, strode the deck proudly. But water is not the Indian's element, and the battle had hardly begun when one fled below in terror; the other remained on deck, and was killed early in the action.

Courageous and self-confident though the American commander was, the moment came when he could no longer disguise the fact that his gallant flag-ship was doomed to destruction before the continuous and deadly fire of her adversaries. There was but one course of action open, and upon this he determined at once. He would transfer his flag to the "Niagara," and from the deck of that vessel direct the movements of his fleet. Accordingly, the only uninjured boat of the "Lawrence" was lowered; and Perry sprang into the stern, followed by his little brother. Before the boat pushed off, the battle-flag was thrown into her; and, wrapping it about him, Perry took a standing position in the stern, and ordered the oarsmen to give way. He steered straight for the "Niagara," through the very centre of the fight. The enemy quickly grasped the purpose of the movement, and great guns and muskets were trained on the little boat. Shot of all sizes splashed in the water about the boat, splintered the oars, and buried themselves in the gunwale. The crew begged their commander to sit down, and make himself a less conspicuous target for the fire of the enemy; but Perry paid but little attention to their entreaties. Suddenly the men rested on the oars, and the boat stopped. Angrily the commodore demanded the cause of the stoppage, and was told that the men refused to row unless he sat down. With a smile he yielded, and soon the boat was alongside the "Niagara." Perry sprang to the deck, followed by his boat's crew and a plucky sailor who

had swum just behind the boat across the long stretch of water. Hardly a glance did the commodore cast at the ship which he had left, but bent all his faculties to taking the new flag-ship into the battle.



MAKING READY TO LEAVE THE "LAWRENCE."

The "Niagara" was practically a fresh ship; for, up to this time, she had held strangely aloof from the battle. Now all was to be changed. The battle-flag went to her masthead; and she plunged into the thick of the fight, striking thunderous blows at every ship she encountered. As

she passed the American lines, the sailors greeted with cheers their gallant commander. The crippled "Lawrence," an almost helpless hulk, left far behind, was forced to strike her flag; although her crew protested loudly, crying out, "Sink the ship, and let us go down with her." But the conquered vessel was not destined to fall into the hands of her enemies. Already the sight of their commodore on a fresh vessel stimulated the American tars; so that in half an hour the British line was broken, their ships cut to pieces, and the "Detroit," their flag-ship, a prize to the "Niagara." A white handkerchief was waved at the end of a pike by one of the crew of the "Princess Charlotte." The firing stopped, the flag was again run up to the masthead of the "Lawrence," while a few feeble cheers came faintly over the water from the remnant of her crew.

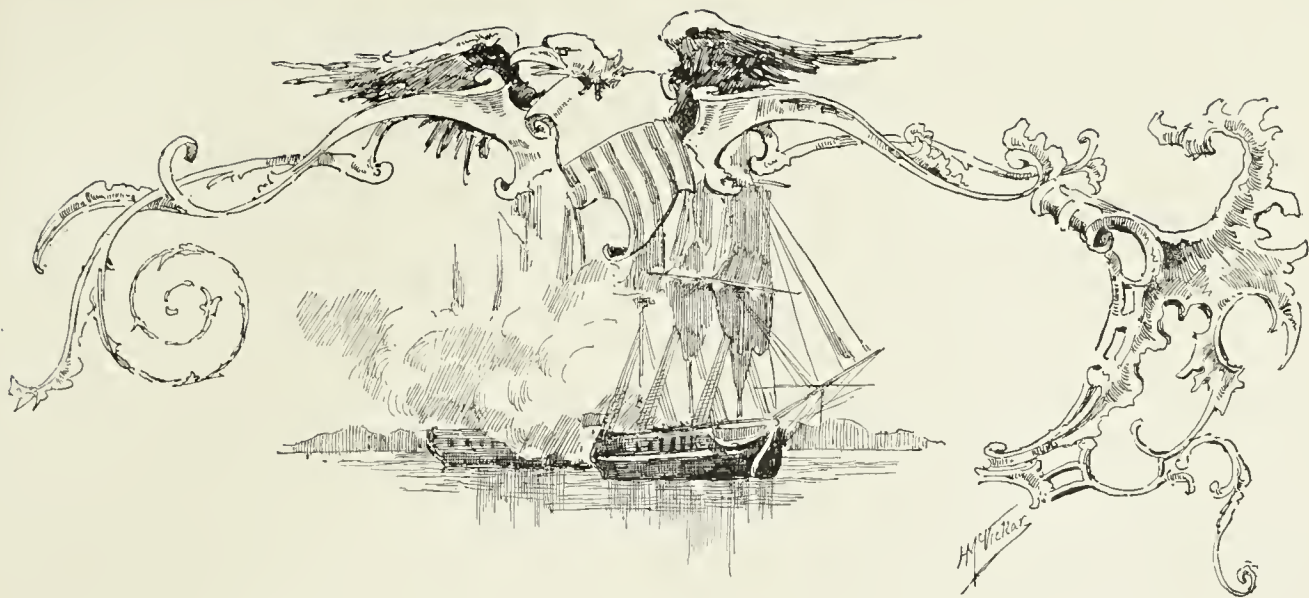
The dense clouds of smoke blowing away, Perry saw, by the disposition of his squadron, that the victory was secure. Hastily catching off his navy-cap, he laid upon it a sheet of paper torn from an old letter, and wrote to Gen. Harrison the famous despatch, "*We have met the enemy, and they are ours,—two ships, two brigs, one schooner, and one sloop.*"

Then, with true chivalry, he determined that to his flag-ship "Lawrence," that had so stoutly borne the brunt of battle, should belong the honor of receiving the British captains, when they came to surrender their vessels. He returned to the "Lawrence;" but the scene there was such that even the excitement of victory could raise no feelings of exultation in his breast. He saw on every side the bodies of officers with whom, but the night before, he had dined in perfect health. The decks were red with blood, and from the cock-pit arose the groans of the wounded.

After the formal surrender, to make which the officers picked their way over the deck covered with slain to the quarter-deck, the work of burying the dead of both squadrons was begun. It was about sundown that the sad ceremonies were held; and, as the deep tones of the chaplains reading the burial-service arose upon the evening air, the dull, mournful splashing of heavy bodies in the water told that the last scene in the great victory was drawing to an end.



PERRY UNDER FIRE.



CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE OCEAN.—THE "HORNET" SINKS THE "PEACOCK,"—THE BLOCKADE,—ADVENTURES OF THE "SALLY."—HOSTILITIES ON CHESAPEAKE BAY.—THE CRUISE OF THE "PRESIDENT."

THE year 1813, that brought to American sailors upon the lakes such well-earned laurels, opened auspiciously for the stars and stripes upon the ocean. It will be remembered that the "Constitution," while on the cruise in the South Atlantic that ended with the destruction of the "Java," had left the "Hornet" off San Salvador, blockading the British ship "Bonne Citoyenne." For eighteen days the "Hornet" remained at her post. Her captain continually urged the enemy to come out and give him battle, but to no avail. The remembrance of his valuable cargo deterred the Englishman, and he remained snug in his harbor. Months after, when the occurrence became known in the United States, an unreasoning outcry was raised against the commander of the "Bonne Citoyenne" for thus avoiding the conflict; but naval men have always agreed that his action was wise and commendable.

After eighteen days' service on this blockade, the "Hornet" saw a British seventy-four bearing down upon her, bent upon releasing the treasure-ship. Against such odds it would have been folly to contend;

and the Americans, taking advantage of a dark night, slipped away, and were soon beyond pursuit. The vessel continued her cruise in the waters south of the equator, meeting with good fortune, and taking many valuable prizes, from one of which twenty-three thousand dollars in specie were taken. But her cruise was not destined to proceed without serious opposition.

On the 24th of February, as the "Hornet" was giving close chase to a suspicious brig near the mouth of the Demarara River, a second stranger was sighted in the offing. Giving no heed to the newly sighted vessel, the "Hornet" continued her chase until the rapidly approaching vessel was clearly made out to be a brig, flying the British flag, and evidently a man-of-war. The "Hornet" was immediately cleared for action; and the two hostile vessels began manœuvring for the weather-gage, as two scientific pugilists spar cautiously for an opening. In this contest of seamanship, Capt. Lawrence of the "Hornet" proved the victor; and a little after five o'clock in the afternoon, the two enemies stood for each other upon the wind, the "Hornet" having the weather-gage. As they rapidly neared each other, no sound was heard save the creaking of the cordage, and the dashing of the waves against the vessels' hulls. Not a shot was fired until the enemies were dashing past each other, going in opposite directions. The first broadsides were exchanged at half pistol-shot, with very unequal effects. The shot of the "Hornet" penetrated the hull of her antagonist, doing terrible execution; while the broadside let fly by the "Peacock" whistled through the rigging of the American ship, cutting away the pennant, and killing a topman, who was struck by a round shot, and dashed from his station in the mizzen-top, to fall mangled and lifeless into the sea.

Hardly were the ships clear, when the British captain put his helm hard up,—a manœuvre executed with the intention of securing a raking position. But the plan was balked by the cool seamanship of Capt. Lawrence, who quickly followed up the British vessel, and, getting a position on his quarter, poured in so rapid and accurate a fire that the enemy was fain to haul down his colors and confess defeat. The British ensign

had hardly touched the deck, when it was run up again, with the union down, as a token of distress. At this sight, the Yankee tars, who had been cheering lustily over their quickly won victory, stopped their rejoicings, and set about giving assistance to the injured Britons with as hearty good-will as they had lately shown in their vigorous cannonade.

With all possible despatch, a boat was lowered, and Lieut. Shubrick proceeded on board the prize. He found the "Peacock" a complete wreck. Shortly after the surrender her main-mast had gone by the board, and her hull was fairly honeycombed with shot-holes. Returning to his ship, Shubrick reported the condition of the prize. He was immediately ordered to return to the "Peacock," and make every effort to save her. Accompanied by three boats' crews of American sailors, he again boarded the sinking ship, and bent every energy to the attempt for her salvation. Bulwarks were cut away, and the heavy guns were rolled out of the gaps thus made, and cast into the sea. Deep down in the hold, and swinging like spiders over the sides of the vessels, sailors tried to stop up with felt-covered blocks of wood the great holes through which the water was pouring. All the time boats were plying between the sinking vessel and the "Hornet," transferring the wounded and the prisoners. Twilight fell before the work was ended, and it became evident to all that the "Peacock" must sink during the night. But the end came even quicker than had been expected. Some new rent must have opened in the brig's side; for, with a sudden lurch, she commenced to sink rapidly, bow foremost. Several of the English crew were below, searching for liquor; and, caught by the inpouring flood, they found a watery grave in the sinking hulk. Three Americans were also engulfed; and five narrowly escaped death by climbing up the rigging to the foretop, which remained above water when the hull rested upon the bottom. In the midst of the excitement and confusion, four British seamen slyly clambered out of the cabin-windows, and, dropping into a boat that was made fast to the stern, made off in the darkness. The Americans, eagerly watching the sinking ship, did not detect the fugitives until the boat was far beyond the possibility of recapture.

The vessel so quickly destroyed by the "Hornet" was the British man-of-war brig "Peacock," mounting ten guns, and carrying a crew of two hundred and ten men. In one respect, she was a model ship. Among naval men, she had long been known as "the yacht," on account of the appearance of exquisite neatness she always presented. Her decks were as white as lime-juice and constant holystoning could keep them. The brass-work about the cabins and the breeches of the guns was dazzling in its brilliancy. White canvas lined the breechings of the carronades. Her decks everywhere showed signs of constant toil in the cause of cleanliness. The result of the battle, however, seemed to indicate that Capt. Peakes had erred, in that, while his ship was perfect, his men were bad marksmen, and poorly disciplined. While their shot were harmlessly passing through the rigging of the "Hornet," the Americans were pouring in well-directed broadsides, that killed and wounded thirty-eight men, and ended the action in fifteen minutes. The Americans lost but one man in the fight, though three more went down in the sinking prize.

Capt. Lawrence now found himself far from home, short of water, and crowded with prisoners. For a time, he feared that to these evils was to be added a second action, while his crew was still fatigued with the labors of the first. During the battle with the "Peacock," a second British man-of-war brig, the "Espègle," lay quietly at anchor only four miles away. Why she had not joined in the strife, has never been explained. She was clearly visible from the tops of the "Hornet" throughout the action, and Lawrence expected every moment to see her bear down to the assistance of her consort. But she made no movement; and even after the fight ended, and the "Peacock" lay on the bottom of the ocean, the mysterious stranger awoke not from her lethargy. Not wishing to engage a second adversary while his ship was crowded with prisoners, Lawrence immediately left the scene of action, and laid his course for home. The homeward voyage was rapid and uneventful. No pains were spared to secure the comfort of the prisoners who crowded the ship. The British officers were treated with the great-

est consideration; so that, as one said on quitting the ship, they "ceased to consider themselves as captives." The tars, who were consigned to the care of the blue-jackets in the fore-castle, were met with less courtesy, but certainly with no less good feeling. They were not spared an occasional taunt or triumphant joke; but when it was learned that by the sinking of their ship the Britons had lost all their "toggeries," the "Hornet's" lads turned to, and soon collected clothing enough to fit out each prisoner with a respectable kit.

It was the middle of March before the long, homeward voyage was ended, and the anchor was dropped in the snug harbor of Holmes's Hole in the island of Martha's Vineyard. The usual rejoicings followed the news of the victory. Lawrence was the hero of the hour; and songs innumerable appeared in the newspapers, extolling the courage and devotion of the brave lads of the "Hornet."

Indeed, the arrival of the "Hornet" with her glorious news came at an opportune moment, to cheer the spirits of the American people. The war had begun to assume a serious aspect. Continued reverses on the ocean had roused the British ministry to the fact that they were dealing with no contemptible enemy, and the word had gone forth that the Americans must be crushed into submission. Troops were hurriedly sent to Canada, and all the vessels that could be spared were ordered to the coast of the United States. The English had determined upon that most effective of all hostile measures,—a rigorous blockade of their enemy's coast. Up and down the coast from New Jersey to the Carolinas, British frigates and sloops kept up a constant patrol. Chesapeake Bay was their chief rendezvous; and the exploits of the blockading squadron stationed there, under Admiral Cockburn, led often to scenes more befitting savage warfare than the hostilities of two enlightened and civilized peoples. On the New England coast, the blockade was less severely enforced. The people of that section had been loud in their denunciations of the war; and the British hoped, by a display of moderation, to seduce the New Englanders from their allegiance to the United States,—a hope that failed utterly of fulfilment. Even had the British

desired to enforce the blockade along the New England shore, the character of the coast, and the skill and shrewdness of the Yankee skippers, would have made the task of the blockaders a most difficult one.

The annals of the little seafaring villages along the coast of Maine and Massachusetts abound in anecdotes of hardy skippers who outwitted the watchful British, and ran their little schooners or sloops into port under the very guns of a blockading man-of-war.

Among the blockade-runners of the New England coast, Capt. Dan Fernald of Portsmouth stood foremost. When a shipload of Maine timber was needed at the Portsmouth navy-yard, to be converted into a new man-of-war, to Capt. Fernald was assigned the task of bringing it down from Portland past the British frigates, that were ever on the watch for just such cargoes. When the preparations for the building of the seventy-four-gun ship "Washington" were making at the navy-yard, Capt. Fernald was sent to Portsmouth for a load of ship's-timber. His cargo was to consist of forty-eight "knees" and the breast-hook of the seventy-four. Loaded down with this burden, the schooner "Sally" left Portland, and headed for her destination. Caution led her captain to keep his craft close to the shore, and for a day or two she crept along the coast without being discovered. But head-winds and calms delayed the "Sally," and on her fourth day out she was sighted by the British frigate "Tenedos." The "Sally" was not an imposing craft, and under ordinary circumstances she might have been allowed to proceed unmolested; but on this occasion a number of the oaken knees for the new war-vessel were piled on the deck, and the British captain could clearly make out, through his glasses, that the "Sally" was laden with contraband of war. Accordingly, he set out in hot pursuit, in the full expectation of overhauling the audacious coaster. Capt. Fernald, however, had no idea of letting his schooner fall into the hands of the British. He was a wily old skipper, and knew every nook and corner of the Maine and New Hampshire coasts better than he knew the streets of his native village. Apparently unmoved by the pursuit of the man-of-war, he stood at the tiller, and, beyond ordering his crew to shake out the reefs in the sails, seemed to make no great

attempt to elude the enemy. But soon the crew noticed that the skipper was taking his schooner rather dangerously close to the shore; and a cry came from a sailor on the bow, that the "Sally" was ploughing through the kelp, and would soon be on the rocks.

"No matter," sung out the captain; "just heave over a few of them knees, and I guess she'll float clear."

Overboard went a dozen heavy timbers, and the "Sally" sailed smoothly on over the rocks. Then the captain glanced back over his shoulder, and chuckled slyly as the majestic frigate, following closely in his track, brought up all of a sudden on the rocks, and was quickly left a fixture by the receding tide. The exasperated Englishman sent two eighteen-pound shot skipping over the water after the "Sally," but without effect. One shot buried itself in the sand of the beach; and Capt. Fernald, after picking up the knecs that had been thrown overboard, coolly went ashore, dug up the ball, and carried it away as a trophy. He reached his moorings at the navy-yard safely, and was warmly greeted by Commodore Hull, who asked if the "Sally" had been fired upon; and, on being presented with the eighteen-pound shot for a token, exclaimed, "You are a good fellow, and stand fire well."

The "Tenedos" came not so luckily out of the adventure. By the time a flood-tide lifted her clear of the reef, the jagged points of the rocks had pierced her hull, so that she leaked badly, and was forced to go to Halifax for repairs.

One more adventure in which the "Sally" and her wily captain figured is worth recounting. Again the dingy schooner was edging her way along the rugged shore, bound for the Portsmouth navy-yard. No vessel could have seemed more harmless. Her patched and dirty canvas was held in place by oft-spliced ropes and rigging none too taut. Her bluff bows butted away the waves in clouds of spray, that dashed over the decks, which seldom received other washing. Her cargo seemed to be cordwood, neatly split, and piled high on deck. While off Casco, the wind dropped down, and the "Sally" was left floating idly upon the glassy ocean. Far in the distance lay an English man-o'-war, also becalmed;

but from which a long-boat, stoutly manned, soon put out, and made for the becalmed schooner. The boat was soon within hail, and a trim young officer in the stern-sheets sung out, —

“What craft’s that?”

“Schooner ‘Sally’ of Portsmouth,” came the answer, in the drawling tones of a down-east skipper.

“Where from?”

“Portland.”

“Where bound?”

“Portsmouth.”

“What’s your cargo?”

“Firewood,” responded Capt. Fernald with a carelessness he was far from feeling; for deep down in the hold, under the cord-wood, were two twenty-four-pounder cannon, thirteen thousand pounds of powder, and about one hundred boarding pikes and cutlasses.

The British officer hesitated a moment, as if the little coaster was of too little importance for further examination.

“Well, I think I’ll come aboard,” said he carelessly, and soon stood with three or four of his men on the deck of the “Sally.”

After glancing contemptuously about the ill-kept decks, he turned to his men with the sharp order: “Clear away some of that wood from the hatchways, and see what’s in the hold.”

The men set to work, passing the cord-wood away from the hatchways, and piling it upon the after-deck. Soon they had worked their way into the hold, and were going deeper and deeper down toward the munitions of war. Capt. Fernald’s blood seemed to stop coursing in his veins. He knew that but one layer of cord-wood then lay above the cannon, and he expected every instant to see the black iron uncovered. But the British officer grew impatient.

“That’s enough of that work,” said he; “there’s nothing but wood there. Captain, you can proceed on your course.”

A momentary murmur arose from the English sailors. The “Sally” was theirs by right of capture, and they saw no reason for her libera-

tion. "Why, lads," said the officer, "it would cost just as much to get this poor fellow's wood-schooner condemned as it would a large ship. As for the prize-money, it would not make a penny apiece." So, tumbling into their boat, the jackies pulled away; shouting to the captain of the "Sally" to stow his cargo again, or his old tub would capsize. Capt. Fernald took their jeers good-naturedly, for he was the victor in that encounter.

The occurrence had been observed from the shore; and, when the British sailors were seen swarming over the side of the "Sally," a horseman set off for Portsmouth to notify Commodore Hull that the schooner was captured. It was a sore blow; for the guns and powder were thought to be lost, and munitions of war were hard to be had at that time. But Hull soon threw aside the disappointment, and was busily engaged with plans for the vessels then building, when a sentry came in, and reported the "Sally" in sight. Hull rushed to the water-side. Sure enough, there came the battered old schooner, butting her way through the waves of the channel; and, before long, the two cannon were safe in the storehouses, while Capt. Fernald found himself vested with a reputation for almost superhuman sagacity and luck.

Not all the encounters between the blockaders and the blockade-runners terminated so happily for the Americans. Many a coasting-vessel was sent to Halifax to swell the coffers of the British prize-courts, or, after being set on fire, was left to lie charred and ruined upon the rocky shore, as a warning to all who violated the blockade.

The capture of one United States war-vessel graced the English naval annals of January, 1813; for the little brig "Viper," carrying twelve guns, fell in the way of the British, thirty-two, "Narcissus," and straightway surrendered to the overwhelming force of her enemy.

Among the United States war-vessels caught and held in port by the blockade was the frigate "Constellation." She was at the opening of the war the favorite ship of the American navy; her exploits in the war with France having endeared her to the American people, and won for her among Frenchmen the name of "the Yankee race-horse." Notwith-

standing her reputation for speed, she is said to have been very crank, and had an awkward way of getting on her beam-ends without much provocation. An almost incredible tale is told of her getting "knocked down" by a squall while chasing a French privateer, and, notwithstanding the delay, finally overhauling and capturing the chase.

When war was declared with England, the "Constellation" was so thoroughly dismantled, that some months were occupied in refitting before she was ready to put to sea. In January, 1813, she dropped anchor in Hampton Roads, expecting to set out on an extended cruise the next morning. Had she been a day earlier, her career in the War of 1812 might have added new lustre to her glorious record in the war with France; but the lack of that day condemned her to inglorious inactivity throughout the war: for on that very night a British squadron of line-of-battle ships and frigates dropped anchor a few miles down the bay, and the "Constellation" was fairly trapped.

When, by the gray light of early morning, the lookout on the "Constellation" saw the British fleet lying quietly at their anchorage down the bay, he reported to Capt. Stewart; and the latter saw that, for a time, he must be content to remain in port. Stewart's reputation for bravery and devotion to his country leaves no doubt that the prospect of prolonged idleness was most distasteful to him. But he had little time to mourn over his disappointment. The position of the frigate was one of great danger. At any moment she might be exposed to attack by the hostile fleet. Accordingly, she dropped down abreast of Craney Island, where she was secure from attack by the British vessels, but still open to the assaults of their boats.

To meet this danger, Capt. Stewart took the most elaborate precautions. His ship was anchored in the middle of the narrow channel; and on either side were anchored seven gunboats, officered and manned by the men of the frigate. Around the gunboats and frigate extended a vast circle of floating logs, linked together by heavy chains, that no boarders might come alongside the vessels. The great frigate towered high above the surrounding gunboats, her black sides unbroken by an

open port; for the gun-deck ports were lashed down, and the guns housed. Not a rope's end was permitted to hang over the side; the stern ladders were removed, and the gangway cleats knocked off. An enemy might as well hope to scale the unbroken front of a massive wall of masonry, as that dark, forbidding hull. From the bulwarks rose on all sides, to the ends of the yards, a huge net made of ratlin stuff, boiled in pitch until it would turn the edge of a cutlass, and further strengthened by nail-rods and small chains. The upper part of the netting was weighted with kentledge, the pigs of iron used for ballast; so that, should the hardy assailants succeed in coming alongside and scaling the side, a few blows of an axe would let fall the heavily weighted nettings, sweeping the boarders into the sea, and covering boats and men with an impenetrable mesh, under which they would be at the mercy of the sailors on the frigate's decks. The carronades and howitzers were loaded with grape; and the officers and men felt that only bravery on their part was essential to the defeat of any force that Great Britain could send against the ship.

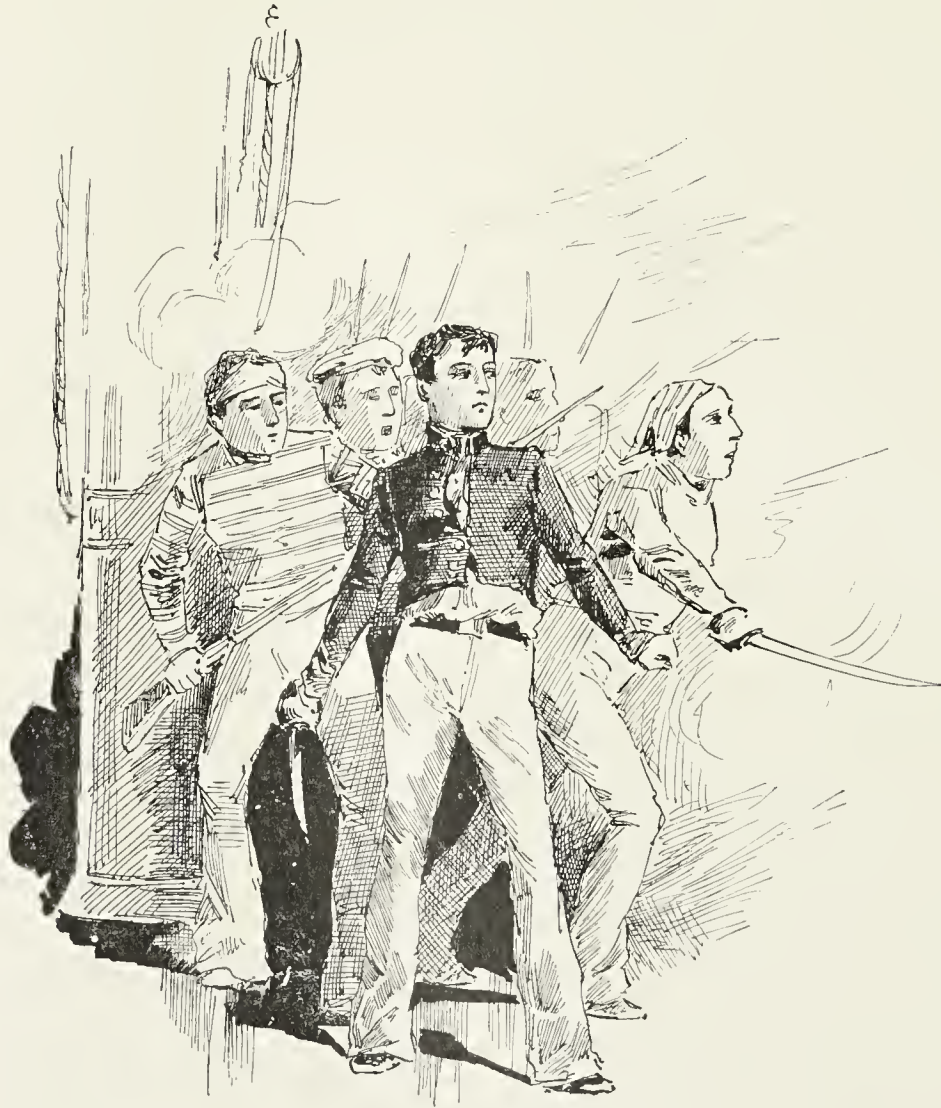
Heedless of these formidable preparations for their reception, the enemy set under way two expeditions for the capture of the "Constellation." In neither case did the antagonists actually come to blows, for the approach of the British was discovered before they came within pistol-shot; and, as their only chance lay in surprising the Americans, they retired without striking a blow. The coming of the first expedition was known upon the "Constellation" the day before it actually set out. A Portuguese merchantman, trying to beat out of the bay, had been stopped by the British, and anchored a few miles below the American frigate. A guard and lookout from the English fleet were stationed on the Portuguese to watch the "Constellation." In an unguarded moment, these men let fall a hint of the movement under way; and an American passenger on the Portuguese vessel quickly carried the news to Capt. Stewart, and volunteered to remain and aid in the defence. The next night was dark and drizzly; and the British, to the number of two thousand, set out in boats for the "Constellation." Hardly were they within gun-shot, when two lanterns gleamed from the side of a

watchful guard-boat; and the roll of drums and sound of hurrying feet aboard the frigate told that the alarm was given. The assailants thereupon abandoned the adventure, and returned to their ship. The next night they returned, but again retreated discomfited. Several nights later, a third expedition came up. This time the guard-boat was far down the bay; and, seeing the huge procession of boats, the Americans calmly edged in among them, and for some time rowed along, listening to the conversation of the British, who never dreamed that an enemy could be in their midst. Suddenly a sailor, more sharp-eyed than the rest, caught sight of the interlopers; and the cry was raised, "A stranger!" The Americans tugged at their oars, and were soon lost to sight; but, not being pursued, returned, and accompanied their foes up the bay, and even anchored with the flotilla at a point above the "Constellation." The enemy, finding the Americans constantly on the watch, abandoned their designs on the ship, and vowed that Capt. Stewart must be a Scotchman, as he could never be caught napping. Some days later, an officer, sent with a flag of truce to the British fleet, vastly chagrined the officers there by repeating their remarks overheard by the guard-boat officers who joined the British flotilla in the dark. These three escapes confirmed the reputation borne by the "Constellation," as a "lucky ship;" and although she remained pent up in port throughout the war, doing nothing for her country, her luck was unquestioned in the minds of the sailors. With her they classed the "Constitution" and "Enterprise," while the "Chesapeake" and "President" were branded as unlucky. Certainly the career of these ships in the War of 1812 went far to confirm the superstitious belief of the sailors.

In the course of the next two months, Chesapeake Bay was the scene of two gallant adventures, in which American privateersmen were opposed to the British sailors. On Feb. 8, the privateer schooner "Lottery" was standing down the bay under easy sail, out-bound on a voyage to Bombay. The schooner was one of the clipper-built craft, for which Baltimore ship-builders were famous the world over. Her battery consisted of six twelve-pounder carronades, and her crew numbered twenty-

five men. Near the point at which the noble bay opens into the Atlantic ocean, a narrow sheet of water extends into the Virginia shore, winding in sinuous courses several miles inland. This is known as Lynnhaven Bay; and on its placid surface there lay, on the morning of the "Lottery's" appearance, four powerful frigates flying the British flag. From their tops the approaching schooner could be seen across the low-lying neck of land that separated the smaller bay from the main body of water. The cry of "Sail, ho!" roused the fleet to sudden activity; and an expedition of two hundred men was quickly organized to proceed against the privateer. Fortune seemed to favor the British; for hardly had the boats left the fleet, when the fresh breeze died away, and the schooner was left at the mercy of the boats, which, propelled by the long, swinging strokes of man-o'-war oarsmen, bore down rapidly upon her. Capt. Southcomb of the "Lottery" was an American sailor, who had smelt powder before; and he had no idea of yielding up his ship without a struggle. The formidable force sent against him merely moved him to more desperate resistance. When the boats came within range, the guns of the "Lottery" opened upon them with a hail of grape and round shot. Still the assailants pressed on, and soon came beneath the schooner's lee. Dropping their oars, the plucky British tars sprang into the chains, swarmed up the bobstay and over the bow, and used each other's backs as ladders to aid them to reach the schooner's deck. The little crew of privateersmen fought viciously, guarding the side with cutlasses and pistols, hurling the boarders back into the sea, or cutting them down as they reached the deck. Cold shot and kentledge were dashed upon the boats, in the hopes of sinking them; while the carronades poured a destructive fire upon such boats as could be reached by their shot. But the conflict was too unequal to last long. The English sailors swarmed over the gunwale on all sides, and, cheering lustily, drove the small remnant of defenders below. Capt. Southcomb was cut down, and lay mortally wounded upon the deck when the enemy took possession of the ship. When the victors came to look about the captured vessel, they found such proofs of a desperate resistance, that their admiration was

open and pronounced. Five only of the schooner's crew were unhurt, while the British paid for their success with the loss of thirteen men.



AWAITING THE BOARDERS.

Capt. Southcomb, in a dying condition, was taken aboard the frigate "Belvidera," where he received the tenderest treatment, and was shown marked respect on account of his bravery.

In the next encounter between the blockaders and a privateer, the

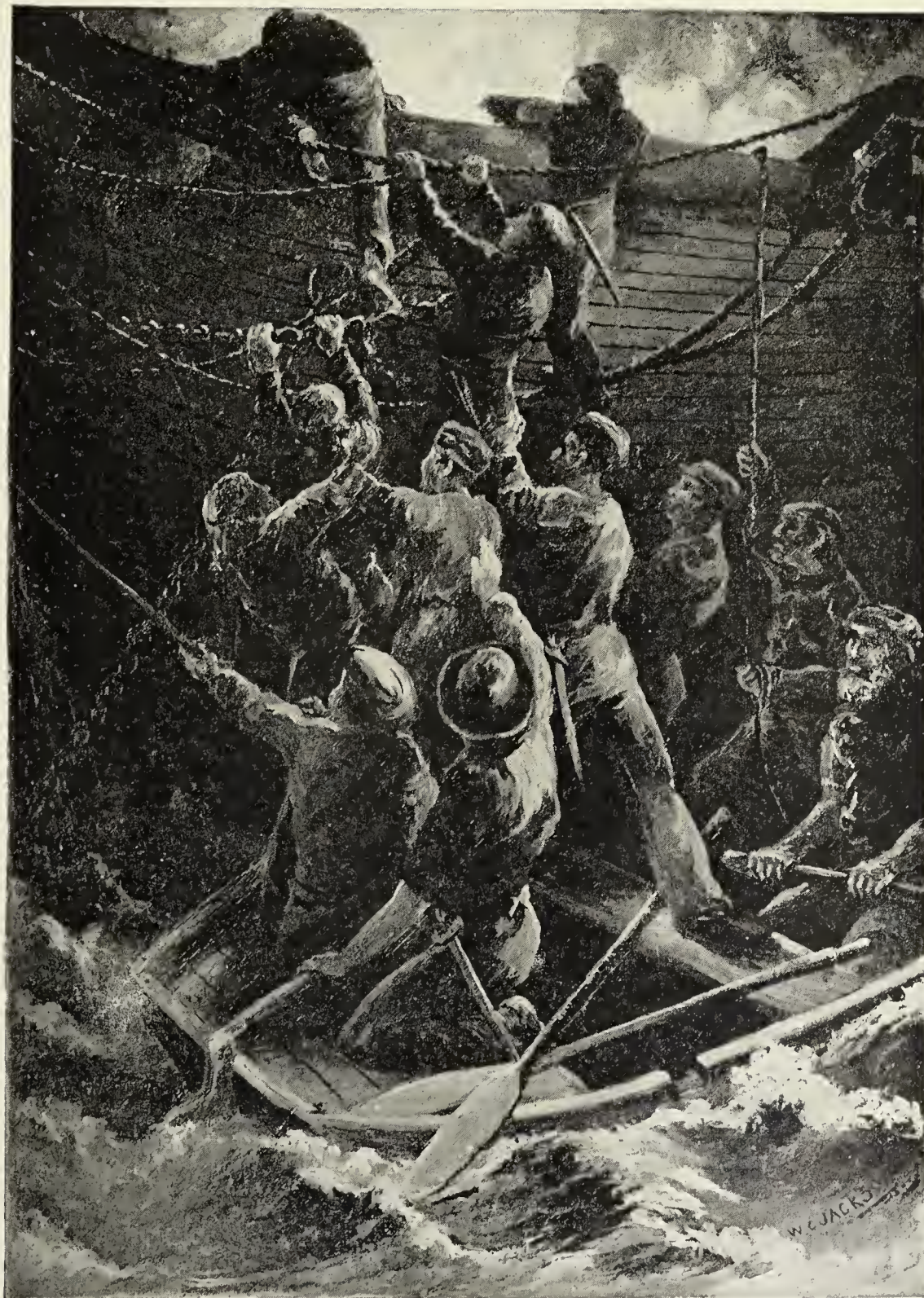
British bore away the palm for gallantry. This time the privateersmen had every advantage, while the British carried the day by pure courage. The captured vessels were the privateer schooner "Dolphin," of twelve guns, and the letters-of-marque "Racer," "Arab," and "Lynx," of six guns each. The crews of the four vessels aggregated one hundred and sixty men. Against this force came five boats manned by one hundred and five British sailors, who pulled fifteen miles in order to attack their foes. Wearied though they were by the long pull, the sight of the privateers seemed to arouse new strength in the plucky tars; and, without a thought of the odds against them, they dashed forward, cheering, and calling upon the Americans to surrender. Had the four schooners been manned by such brave men as those who defended the "Lottery," the assailants might have been beaten off. As it was, two vessels surrendered without firing a shot. The crew of the "Racer" fought pluckily for a time, but were soon overpowered, and the vessel's guns turned upon the "Dolphin." When fire was opened upon this last vessel, her crew, affrighted, leaped overboard from every side; and the "Dolphin" was soon in the hands of her enemies, who had lost but thirteen men in the whole action.

Many a gallant adventure, such as this, is to be laid to the credit of the British tars on the American station during the continuance of the blockade. Right dashing fellows were they, at cutting out a coasting-schooner as she lay under the guns of some American earthworks. The lads that have won for England her supremacy upon the seas have never been behindhand at swarming up the sides of an enemy, leaping his taffrail, and meeting him on his own deck with the cold steel. And as the year rolled on, and the blockade along the American coast was made more strict, the meetings between the enemies became more frequent. From every seaport town, Yankee privateers were waiting to escape to sea; and they seldom won clear without a brush with the watchful enemy. The British, too, had begun to fit out privateers, though American commerce offered but little enticement for these mercenary gentry. Between the ships of the two private armed navies, encounters were

common; and the battles were often fought with courage and seamanship worthy of the regular navy.

Little glory was won by the navy of the United States during the opening months of the year. Many ships were laid up in port; while some, like the "Constellation," were blockaded by the enemy. The "President" and the "Congress" managed to get to sea from Boston in April, and entered upon a protracted cruise, in which the bad luck of the former ship seemed to pursue her with malevolent persistence. The two ships parted after cruising in company for a month, and scoured the ocean until the following December, when they returned home, experiencing little but continual disappointments. The "Congress" could report only the capture of four British merchantmen, as the result of her eight months' cruise; while the long service had so seriously injured her hull, that she was condemned as unseaworthy, and ended her career, a dismantled hulk reduced to the ignoble service of store-ship at a navy-yard.

The "President" was little more fortunate in her search for prizes. After parting with her consort, she beat about in the vicinity of the Gulf Stream, in the hopes of getting a ship or two returning from the West Indies. But day after day passed, and no ship appeared. Changing his plan, Commodore Rodgers made for the North Sea, feeling sure that there he would find in plenty the marine game for which he was seeking. But, to his astonishment, not an English ship was to be found. It was then the middle of summer, and the frigate had been at sea for nearly three months. The jackies on the forecastle were weary of the long voyage, and fairly at the end of their occupations for "teasing time." The officers, well knowing the effect of long idleness upon the sailors, were tireless in devising means of employment. The rigging was set up weekly, so that the shrouds and stays were like lines drawn with a ruler. Enough rope-yarn was pulled, and spun-yarn spun, to supply a navy-yard for months. Laggards were set to scrubbing the rust off the chain cables, and sharpening with files the flukes of the anchors. When such work failed, the men were drilled in the use of



CUTTING OUT PRIZES.

cutlasses and single sticks; forming long lines down the gun-deck, and slashing away with right good will at the word of the instructor. But the monotony of a long cruise without a prize cannot long be beguiled by such makeshifts; and it was with the heartiest pleasure that the sailors heard that the commodore had determined to put into port for a time, and take on board stores.

It was North Bergen, Norway, that Rodgers chose for this purpose; and an unfortunate choice it proved to be, for a famine prevailed in the country, and only water could be obtained for the ship. Leaving the inhospitable port, the "President" was soon again upon the ocean. She quickly took two British merchantmen, from which she replenished her stores. Shortly after, two hostile frigates hove in sight, and the "President" fled for her life before them for more than eighty hours. At that season, in those high latitudes, no friendly darkness settled over the ocean to give the fugitive a chance to escape. Bright daylight persisted throughout the chase, and the sun never dipped below the horizon. Sheer good sailing saved the American frigate, and enabled her to leave her pursuers far in her wake.

For some days thereafter, better luck seemed to attend the frigate that so pluckily kept up her operations in seas thousands of miles from a friendly port. With true Yankee audacity, she extended her cruise even into the Irish Channel, and there preyed upon British commerce until the enemy was moved to send a squadron to rout out the audacious intruder. Then Rodgers set sail for home.

On the voyage to the United States, the "President" captured a British armed schooner by a stratagem which taught at least one British officer to respect "Yankee cuteness."

It was near the last of September that the frigate was flying along before a fresh breeze. Her yards were spread with a cloud of snowy canvas, and the wind sung through the straining cordage a melody sweet to the ears of the sailor homeward bound. Towards evening, a small sail was made out in the distance; and, as time wore on, it was seen that she was rapidly approaching the "President." Rodgers surmised

that the stranger might be a British vessel, and determined to lure her within range by strategy. In some way he had obtained knowledge of some of the private signals of the British navy; and in a few minutes from the masthead of the American frigate, there fluttered a row of flags which announced her as the British frigate "Sea-Horse." The stranger promptly responded, and was made out to be the schooner "Highflyer," a little craft noted for her sailing qualities. Unsuspectingly the "Highflyer" came under the stern of the American frigate, and waited for a boat to be sent aboard. Soon the boat came; and one of Rodgers's lieutenants, clad in British uniform, clambered up the side, and was received with due honor. He was the bearer of a message from Commodore Rodgers, requesting that the signal-books of the "Highflyer" be sent on board the fictitious "Sea-Horse" for comparison and revision. This the British captain hastened to do, and soon followed his books to the deck of the frigate, where a lieutenant met him, clothed in full British uniform. A file of marines, dressed in the scarlet coats of the British service, stood on the deck; and the duped Englishman greatly admired the appearance of the frigate, remarking to the officer who escorted him to Rodgers's cabin, that so trim a craft could only be found in His Majesty's service.

On entering the cabin, the English officer greeted Commodore Rodgers with deference, and proceeded at once to tell of naval matters.

"I have here," said he, placing a bundle of papers in the commodore's hands, "a numbers of despatches for Admiral Warren, who is on this station. You may not know that one of the principal objects of our squadron cruising here is the capture of the Yankee frigate 'President,' which has been greatly annoying British commerce."

Rodgers was naturally much interested in this statement, and asked the visitor if he knew much about the commander of the "President."

"I hear he is an odd fish," was the response; "and certainly he is devilish hard to catch."

Rodgers started. He had hardly expected so frank an expression of opinion.

"Sir," said he emphatically, "do you know what vessel you are on board of?"

"Why, certainly, — on board of His Majesty's ship 'Sea-Horse.'"



"I AM COMMODORE RODGERS."

"No, sir, you are mistaken," was the startling response. "You are on board of the United States frigate 'President,' and I am Commodore Rodgers."

The astounded Englishman sprang to his feet, and rushed to the deck. The sight he saw there was still more startling. The quarter-deck was crowded with officers in United States uniform. The scarlet coats of the marines had vanished, and were replaced by Yankee blue. Even as he looked, the British flag came fluttering down, the American ensign went up, and the band struck up "Yankee Doodle."

Nothing was left to the Englishman but to submit; and, with the best grace possible, he surrendered his vessel and himself to the "odd fish," who had so cleverly trapped him.

Three days later, the "President," with her prize, and crowded with prisoners, dropped anchor in the harbor of Newport, after a cruise of one hundred and forty-eight days. In actual results, the cruise was far from satisfactory, for but eleven vessels had been taken. But the service rendered the country by annoying the enemy's merchantmen, and drawing the British war-vessels away in chase, was vast. At one time more than twenty British men-of-war were searching for the roving American frigate; and the seafaring people of the United States were thus greatly benefited by the "President's" prolonged cruise.



JACK AT HOME.



CHAPTER IX.

DECATUR BLOCKADED AT NEW YORK.—ATTEMPTS TO ESCAPE THROUGH LONG ISLAND SOUND.—THE FLAG-SHIP STRUCK BY LIGHTNING.—TORPEDOES.—FULTON'S STEAM FRIGATE.—ACTION BETWEEN THE "CHESAPEAKE" AND "SHANNON."



WHILE the "President" was thus roaming the seas, almost within sight of the shores of the British Isles, events were occurring along the American coast which were little likely to raise the spirits of the people of the United States. From the "President," the "Congress," the "Essex," and the smaller vessels that were upholding the honor of the flag upon the ocean, they could hear nothing. But worse than this was it for the good people of New York or Boston to go down to the water-side and see stanch United States frigates kept in port by the overwhelming forces of the enemy, that lay watchfully outside the harbor's mouth.

For there was no doubt about it: the blockade was daily becoming closer; and in the months of April and May a ship would have found it a hard task to run out of New York Harbor without falling into the hands of the British fleet stationed there. But, at that very time, three stout men-of-war floated on the waves of that noble bay, under the com-

mand of an officer little used to staying quietly in port in time of war. The officer was Stephen Decatur: and the ships were the flag-ship "United States;" the captured "Macedonian," repaired, and flying the stars and stripes, under the command of the gallant Capt. Jacob Jones; and the sloop-of-war "Hornet," Capt. Biddle.

With this force under his command, Decatur burned with the desire to get to sea. The watchfulness of the British at the Narrows made it useless to think of escaping that way: therefore, he determined to pass up the sound, and reach the ocean by way of the opening between Montauk Point and Block Island. At the very outset of this voyage, however, was a serious obstacle. Through the narrow channel of the East River, between Ward's Island and the Long Island shore, the tides rushed with a mad speed and turbulence, that had won for the strait the significant name of Hell Gate. The United States Government had not then bent its energies to undermining and blowing into bits the jagged rocks that at low tide reared their crests above the swirling eddies. With its tides like mill races, and rocks hidden beneath the treacherous water, Hell Gate was a fearful place for any ship to make its way through with the uncertain aid of sails alone. Still greater were its dangers for the ponderous and deep-laden men-of-war, that required deep water and plenty of sea-room for their movements. Such considerations, however, had no weight with Decatur, who had seen his ships lying idly at their anchorage off Staten Island long enough. In the night of May 24, he accordingly got up anchors and started for the sound.

Hell Gate was passed safely, thanks to a skilful pilot, whom neither the darkness of the night, nor the perils of the narrow channel, could daunt. Once past this danger, the three vessels made their way up the sound, with the flag-ship leading. They had gone but a little way when black clouds to the westward told of a coming storm. The cloud-bank came rolling up rapidly; and soon, with a burst of rain, the three vessels were enveloped in the thunder-shower. The lightning flashed through the black clouds, the thunder crashed and roared, and the wind shrieked

fiercely through the cordage. The "United States" held her place at the head of the squadron; while behind, at the distance of half a cable's-length, came the "Macedonian." Suddenly the men on the deck of the latter vessel were horrified to see a jagged flash of lightning cut its zigzag course through the clouds, then dart, straight as an arrow, at the main-mast of the "United States." Hoarse cries were heard from the deck of the stricken frigate; and the captain of the "Macedonian," fearing lest the "States" should blow up, threw all aback on his ship, to escape the explosion. But happily the thunderbolt had done little serious injury. In its course it had cut away the pendant; shot into the doctor's cabin, extinguishing that worthy's candle, to his vast astonishment; then, gliding away, broke through the ship's hull near the water-line, and plunged into the sea, after ripping off a few sheets of copper from the ship's bottom. No delay was caused by the accident; though the superstitious sailors pronounced it an evil omen, and dismally predicted all sorts of disasters.

On the 29th of May the squadron reached the strait through which Decatur hoped to gain the ocean; but, to the intense disappointment of all on board, a formidable British fleet barred all egress. Three days later the Americans made an attempt to slip out unseen; but, failing in this, they returned to New London harbor, where the two frigates were kept rotting in the mud until the war was ended. The "Hornet" luckily managed to run the blockade, and of her exploits we shall hear later.

Upon the arrival of the three American ships at New London, the enemy guarded the coast with renewed vigilance. The inhabitants made every attempt to drive away the blockaders; and in the course of this prolonged struggle there appeared, for almost the first time in the history of warfare, that most terrible of offensive weapons, the submarine torpedo.

During the Revolution, two attempts had been made to blow up British men-of-war by means of torpedoes, invented by a Saybrook mechanic named Bushnell. Though the attempts failed, yet the torpedoes demonstrated their tremendous power. Before the declaration of the second war with England, Robert Fulton, the inventor of the steamboat, had

made many improvements upon Bushnell's designs, and had so thoroughly spread the knowledge of torpedo warfare that it suggested itself to many New Englanders as a means of driving the enemy from their coast.

The first attempt was well planned, but failed through an entirely accidental combination of circumstances. Certain private citizens (for in that day it was thought ignoble for a government to embark in torpedo warfare) fitted out in New York a schooner, the "Eagle," in the hold of which ten kegs of powder, together with sulphur and piles of heavy stones, were placed. In the head of one of the casks were two gunlocks, primed, and held in place by two barrels of flour. Should either of the barrels be moved, the lock would spring, and the terrible mine would explode with tremendous force. With this dreadful engine of destruction, carefully covered by a cargo of flour and naval stores, the "Eagle" left New York, and made her way up the bay, until, near New London, she was overhauled and captured by the British frigate "Ramillies." Boats were sent out by the English to take possession of the prize; but the crew of the "Eagle," seeing the enemy coming, took to their small boats, and succeeded in safely reaching the shore. The captors, on boarding the vessel, were vastly pleased to find that its cargo consisted largely of flour, of which the "Ramillies" stood in great need. They at once attempted to get the frigate alongside the prize, that the captured cargo might be readily transferred. But a calm had fallen, and two hours' constant work with sweeps and towing was unavailing. Accordingly, this plan of action was abandoned, and the boats were ordered to lighten the cargo from the "Eagle" to the frigate. Hardly had the first barrel been moved, when, with a roar, and rush of flame and smoke as from a volcano, the schooner blew up. Huge timbers, stones, and barrels were sent flying high into the air. The lieutenant and ten men from the frigate, who were on the "Eagle" at the time, were blown to atoms; and the timbers and missiles, falling on all sides, seriously injured many men in the boats near by. Had the frigate been alongside, where her commander had endeavored to place her, she would have gone to the bottom, with all her crew.

An attempt so nearly successful as this could not be long in leading others to make similar ventures. Sir Thomas Hardy, the commander of the "Ramillies," was kept in a constant fever of apprehension, lest some night his ship should be suddenly sent to the bottom by one of the insidious torpedoes. Several times the ship was attacked; and her escapes were so purely matters of accident, that she seemed almost to be under the protection of some sailors' deity. A Norwich mechanic, who had invented a submarine boat with a speed of three miles an hour, succeeded in getting under the bottom of the blockader three times, but was each time foiled in his attempt to attach a torpedo to the ship's hull. Another American, a fisherman, succeeded in getting alongside in a whale-boat, unobserved, but was driven away before he could get his torpedo in position. Such constant attacks so alarmed Hardy, that at last he gave up bringing his ship to anchor, keeping her continually under way, and, as a further precaution, causing her bottom to be swept every two hours throughout the day and night.

The use of torpedoes was not confined to the people of New England. New York Harbor was closed with a row of them. The British seventy-four "Plantagenet," lying off Cape Henry, Virginia, was nearly sunk by one in the charge of Mr. Mix, an American naval officer. The attack was made near ten o'clock, on an unusually dark night. Mix and his associates pulled in a heavy boat to a point near the bow of the menaced vessel. The torpedo was then slipped into the water, with the clockwork which was to discharge it set in motion. The rushing tide carried the destructive engine down toward the frigate; and the Americans pulled away into the darkness, to await the explosion. But the clockwork had been badly adjusted, and the torpedo exploded just before it reached the ship. A huge column of water, gleaming with a ghostly sulphurous light, was thrown high in the air, falling with terrific force on the deck of the frigate, which was almost capsized by the shock.

A veritable storm of abuse and condemnation followed the introduction of torpedo warfare. All countries and all peoples pronounced it treacherous and cowardly, and the English press was particularly loud

in its denunciations. Yet the torpedo had won its place in the armaments of nations; and to-day we see all the nations of Europe vieing with each other in the invention and construction of powerful and accurate torpedoes and swift torpedo-boats.

The germ of another feature of modern naval organization is to be found in the annals of the War of 1812. The first war-vessel propelled by steam was launched by the Americans for service in this war. She was designed by Robert Fulton, and bore the name of "Fulton the First." In model she was a queer craft, with two hulls like a catamaran, with the single propelling-wheel mounted between them amidships. Her armament was to consist of thirty thirty-two-pounder guns, and two one-hundred-pounder columbiads. A secondary engine was designed to throw floods of water upon the decks and through the port-holes of an enemy. While the vessel was building, reports concerning her reached England; and soon the most ludicrously exaggerated accounts of her power were current in that country. "She mounts forty-four guns," said an English paper, "four of which are one-hundred-pounders, mounted in bomb-proofs, and defended by thousands of boarding-pikes and cutlasses wielded by steam; while showers of boiling water are poured over those boarders who might escape death from the rapidly whirling steel." Unfortunately for the American cause, this much dreaded vessel did not get into the water in time to take any active part in the war.

In June, 1813, while the British blockaders in the Sound were exercising all their ingenuity to keep off the torpedoes, there was fought off the Massachusetts coast, near Boston, an engagement which must go down to history as one of the most brilliant naval duels of the age of sails. The United States frigate "Chesapeake" was refitting at Boston, after a cruise of four months, during which she had more than justified her reputation as an unlucky ship. Though she sailed the waters most frequented by British merchantmen, she returned to port having captured only four vessels. Three men-of-war were sighted, but could not be spoken. Strangely enough, the frigate sailed over the spot where lay the sunken "Peacock" the very day after the "Hornet" had fought her

famous fight. Ill-luck pursued the hapless ship even to her home port; for, as she was entering the port of Boston, a sudden squall carried away the topmast, with several men who were aloft at the time.

When the "Hornet" reached port, after her victory over the "Peacock," her gallant captain, James Lawrence, was appointed to the command of the "Chesapeake." On reaching his ship, he found affairs in a desperate condition. The sailors who had sailed on the long and unproductive cruise were firmly convinced that the frigate's bad luck was beyond remedy. The term of enlistment of many had expired, and they were daily leaving the ship. Those who remained were sullen, and smarting under fancied ill-treatment in the matter of the prize-money. To get fresh seamen was no easy task. Great fleets of privateers were being fitted out; and sailors generally preferred to sail in these vessels, in which the discipline was light, and the gains usually great. Some sailors from the "Constitution" were induced to join the "Chesapeake;" and these, with the remnant of the frigate's old crew, formed the nucleus of a crew which was filled up with merchant-sailors and foreigners of all nations. Before the lists were fairly filled, the ship put to sea, to give battle to an adversary that proved to be her superior.

The events leading to the action were simple, and succeeded each other hurriedly. The port of Boston was blockaded by two British frigates, the "Tenedos" thirty-eight, and the "Shannon" thirty-eight. The latter vessel was under the command of Capt. Philip Bowes Vere Broke, a naval officer of courage, skill, and judgment. His crew was thoroughly disciplined, and his ship a model of efficiency. No officer in the service understood better than he the difference between the discipline of a martinet and the discipline of a prudent and sagacious commander. His ship might not, like the "Peacock," merit the title of "the yacht;" but for active service she was always prepared. James, an English naval historian, turns from his usual occupation of explaining the American naval victories by belittling the British ships, and enormously magnifying the power of the victors, to speak as follows of the "Shannon:"—

"From the day on which he [Capt. Broke] joined her, the 14th of September, 1806, the 'Shannon' began to feel the effect of her captain's proficiency as a gunner, and zeal for the service. The laying of the ship's ordnance so that it may be correctly fired in a horizontal direction is justly deemed a most important operation, as upon it depends, in a great measure, the true aim and destructive effect of the shot; this was attended to by Capt. Broke in person. By drafts from other ships, and the usual means to which a British man-of-war is obliged to resort, the 'Shannon' got together a crew; and in the course of a year or two, by the paternal care and excellent regulations of Capt. Broke, the ship's company became as pleasant to command as it was dangerous to meet." Moreover, the historian goes on to relate that the ship's guns were carefully sighted, and her ammunition frequently overhauled. Often a cask would be thrown overboard, and a gun's crew suddenly called to sink it as it bobbed about on the waves astern. Practice with the great guns was of daily occurrence. "Every day for about an hour and a half in the forenoon, when not prevented by chase or the state of the weather, the men were exercised at training the guns; and for the same time in the afternoon in the use of the broad-sword, musket, pike, etc. Twice a week the crew fired at targets, both with great guns and musketry; and Capt. Broke, as an additional stimulus beyond the emulation excited, gave a pound of tobacco to every man that put a shot through the bull's-eye."

Such was the vessel that in June appeared alone off the entrance to Boston Harbor, and by her actions seemed to challenge the "Chesapeake" to give her battle. Indeed, Broke's wish to test the strength of the two vessels was so great, that he sent in, by the hands of an American prisoner, a written challenge, the terms and spirit of which showed the writer to be a courageous and chivalric officer and gentleman. "As the 'Chesapeake' now appears ready for sea," he wrote, "I request you will do me the honor to meet the 'Shannon' with her, ship to ship, to try the fortunes of our respective flags. To an officer of your character, it requires some apology for proceeding to further particulars. Be assured,

sir, it is not from any doubt I can entertain of your wishing to close with my proposal, but merely to provide an answer to any objection which might be made, and very reasonably, upon the chance of our receiving any unfair support." Capt. Broke then proceeds to assure Lawrence that the other British ships in the neighborhood would be sent away before the day of combat. To the challenge was appended a careful statement of the strength of the "Shannon," that Lawrence might understand that the ships were fairly matched.

But before this challenge reached Boston, Lawrence had set out to seek the enemy. He had seen the "Shannon" lying off the entrance to the port; and, finding out that she was alone, he knew that her presence was in itself a challenge that he could not honorably ignore. Nor did he desire to avoid the battle thus offered. He had confidence in his crew, his frigate, and himself, and looked for nothing but victory. To the Secretary of the Navy, he wrote, "An English frigate is now in sight from my deck. I have sent a pilot-boat out to reconnoitre; and, should she be alone, I am in hopes to give a good account of her before night. My crew appear to be in fine spirits, and I hope will do their duty."

In truth, however, the condition of this same crew was such that the captain would have been justified in refusing the challenge. An unusual number of foreign sailors were enrolled, among whom was a Portuguese, who, in the ensuing battle, did incalculable injury to the cause of the "Chesapeake." The crew had never drilled together; many of the sailors came on board only a few hours before the ship sailed out to battle. All the old sailors were sullen over the delay in the payment of the prize-money of their last cruise. Lawrence attempted to allay their discontent by giving them checks for the prize-money; but the sense of injury still lingered in the minds of the men, and they were ill-fitted to do battle for the honor of the flag. Added to this evil was the fact that the first and second lieutenants and two acting lieutenants were away on sick-leave, and the ship was thus left short of officers on the eve of battle.

Regardless of the disadvantages under which he labored, Lawrence weighed anchor on the 1st of June, and started down the harbor. As he approached the ocean, Lawrence mustered his crew aft, and eloquently urged them to fight bravely, and do their duty to the country, which had entered upon this war in defence of seamen and their rights. Three ensigns were run up; and at the fore was unfurled a broad white flag, bearing the motto, "FREE TRADE AND SAILORS' RIGHTS." When Lawrence closed his speech, and pointed out the flag floating at the fore, the men cheered and went forward, leaving the captain convinced that he could depend upon their loyalty.

The morning was bright and cool, with a fresh breeze blowing, before which the "Chesapeake" rapidly bore down upon the foe that awaited her. Following cautiously in her track came a number of small craft, — pilot-boats, sloops, fishing-smacks, and pleasure-boats, — that had come down the bay to see the outcome of the battle. Hundreds of people of Boston rode along the coast, in hopes of gaining an outlook from which the progress of the fight might be viewed.

At noon the ship rounded Boston Light. and made out into the open sea. The "Shannon" went ahead, under easy sail, making up the coast toward Salem. Towards five o'clock the "Chesapeake" luffed up for a moment; while the pilot clambered down the side, and put off in a small boat. A gun was then fired, as a signal that the Americans were ready for action.

The "Shannon" evidently understood the purport of the signal; for she quickly hove to, and troops of agile jackies clambered up her rigging, and began to take in sail. The "Chesapeake" followed suit, and was soon under only top-sails and jib. She then laid her course straight for the enemy.

A ship preparing for action in that day was a scene of hurry and confusion that cannot be equalled in this era of machinery and few guns. At the short, broken, rolling beat of the drums, calling the men to quarters, the hurried rush of hundreds of feet began, as the men came pouring from all parts of the ship to their posts. Some clambered aloft to

their stations in the tops; others invaded the sanctity of the quarter-deck and captain's cabin, where several guns are always mounted. But the most stirring scene is on the long gun-deck, where the men gradually fall into their places at the two long rows of great guns that peer through the open ports on either side. All are stripped to the waist; and at many a gun the fair skin of the American sailor gleams white by the side of some swarthy Spaniard, or still darker negro. All quiet down on reaching their stations; and, five minutes after the drum-beats, no sound is heard, save perhaps the steps of the black boys, taking rations of grog around, that the men may "splice the main brace" before going in to the fight.

Thus silently did the "Chesapeake" bear down upon her adversary. There was no long-range firing; for the two commanders were veterans, whose chief desire was to settle the dispute yard-arm to yard-arm. Gradually the American ship ranged alongside the "Shannon," at a distance of half pistol-shot; and, as her fore-mast came in a line with the "Shan-



BEATING TO QUARTERS.

non's "mizzen-mast, the latter opened fire with her cabin-guns. For a moment the "Chesapeake" was silent, waiting for her guns to bear; then, with sulphuric flashes and a thunderous roar, she let fly her whole broadside. Then followed a duel with great guns. The two ships, lying side by side, dealt and received staggering blows. The spectators in small boats, who kept a safe distance, and the crowds of eager watchers on the far-off heights of Salem, saw through their spy-glasses the flash of the first broadsides, and the flying splinters that followed the course of the deadly shot. Then a heavy cloud of yellow smoke settled over the warring leviathans, and all further incidents of the battle were shut out from view. Only the top-masts of the ships, with the half-furled sails and the opposing ensigns flying, could be seen above the smoke.

Under this vaporous pall, the fighting was sharp and desperate. The first broadside of the "Shannon" so swept the decks of the American frigate, that, of one hundred and fifty men quartered on the upper deck, not fifty were upon their legs when the terrible rush of the shot was over. The sailors in the tops of the British frigate, looking down upon the decks of their enemy, could see nothing but a cloud of hammocks, splinters, and wreckage of all kinds, driven fiercely across the deck. Both men at the wheel fell dead, but their places were soon filled; while fresh gunners rushed down to work the guns that had been silenced by the enemy's fearful broadside. In a moment the "Chesapeake" responded with spirit, and for some time broadsides were exchanged with inconceivable rapidity. The men encouraged each other with cheers and friendly cries. They had named the guns of the frigate, and with each telling shot they cheered the iron-throated monster which had hurled the bolt. "Wilful Murder," "Spitfire," "Revenge," "Bull Dog," "Mad Anthony," "Defiance," "Raging Eagle," and "Viper" were some of the titles born by the great guns; and well the weapons bore out the names thus bestowed upon them. The gunnery of the Americans was good, their shot doing much damage to the enemy's rigging. But the effect of the "Shannon's" broadsides was such that no men, however brave, could stand before them. They swept the decks, mowing down brave fellows



THE DEATH OF LAWRENCE.

by the score. Officers fell on every side. At a critical moment the two ships fouled, exposing the "Chesapeake" to a raking broadside, which beat in her stern-ports, and drove the gunners from the after-port. At this moment, Lawrence was wounded in the leg, but remained at his post and ordered that the boarders be called up. Unhappily a negro bugler had been detailed for the duty usually performed by drummers; and, at this important moment, he could not be found. Midshipmen and lieutenants ran about the ship, striving to call up the boarders by word of mouth. In the confusion, the bugler was found skulking under the stem of the launch, and so paralyzed by fear that he could only give a feeble blast upon his instrument. In the din and confusion of battle, the oral orders of the officers only perplexed the men; and the moment for boarding was lost. At that very moment, the turning-point of the conflict, Capt. Lawrence was struck by a musket-ball, and fell mortally wounded to the deck. His officers rushed to his side, and, raising him gently, were carrying him below, when in a firm voice he cried, —

"Tell the men to fire faster, and not give up the ship. Fight her till she sinks."

With these words on his lips, he was carried to the ward-room.

At this moment, the upper deck was left without an officer above the rank of midshipman. The men, seeing their captain carried below, fell into a panic, which was increased by the explosion of an arm-chest, into which a hand-grenade, hurled by a sailor lying out on the yard-arm of the "Shannon," had fallen. Seeing that the fire of the Americans had slackened, Capt. Broke left his quarter-deck, and, running hastily forward, gained a position on the bow of his ship from which he could look down upon the decks of the "Chesapeake." His practised eye quickly perceived the confusion on the deck of the American frigate; and he instantly ordered that the ships be lashed together, and the boarders called up. An old quartermaster, a veteran in the British navy, set about lashing the ships together, and accomplished his task, although his right arm was actually hacked off by the cutlass of an American sailor. The boarders were slow in coming up, and but twenty men fol-

lowed Broke as he climbed to the deck of the "Chesapeake." Broke led his men straight for the quarter-deck of the frigate. The Americans offered but little resistance. Not an officer was in sight to guide the



ON BOARD THE "CHESAPEAKE."

men, and the newly enlisted sailors and foreigners fled like sheep before the advance of the boarders.

The British reached the quarter-deck with hardly the loss of a man. Here stood Mr. Livermore, the chaplain of the "Chesapeake," who had cruised long with Lawrence, and bitterly mourned the captain's fate.

Determined to avenge the fallen captain, he fired a pistol at Broke's head, but missed him. Broke sprang forward, and dealt a mighty stroke of his keen cutlass at the chaplain's head, who saved himself by taking the blow on his arm. While the boarders were thus traversing the upper deck, the sailors in the tops of the "Chesapeake" were keeping up a well-directed fire, before which many of the Englishmen fell. But this resistance was not of long duration; for one of the "Shannon's" long nines, loaded with grape, swept clean the "Chesapeake's" tops. With this, the British were in full control of the upper deck.

Up to this time, the Americans on the gun-deck had known nothing of the events occurring on the deck above them. When the news of the British assault spread, Licut. Budd called upon the men to follow him, and drive the boarders back to their own ship. A number of the marines (who behaved splendidly throughout the fight) and some twenty veteran sailors were all that responded to the call. Broke had in the mean time summoned the marines of the "Shannon" to his aid; and the British, led by their dashing commander, were pouring in a dense column down the companion-ways to the gun-deck. Budd and his handful of followers attacked them fiercely; and, by the very desperation of the onset, the British were forced back a few paces. Broke threw himself upon the Americans. With his cutlass he cut down the first man who attacked him, and bore down upon the others, dealing deadly blows right and left. His followers came close behind him. The Americans fell on every side, and began to retreat before the overwhelming force of their foes. Up from the wardroom came Lieut. Ludlow, already suffering from two dangerous wounds. He placed himself beside the younger officer, and the two strove in every way to encourage their men. But Ludlow soon fell, with a gaping wound across his forehead. Budd was cut down, and fell through the hatchway to the deck beneath. The sailors, seeing both officers fall, gave way in confusion; and the ship was in the hands of the British. A few marines kept up a fire through the hatchway, but soon were silenced.

An English officer, Lieut. Watts, ran to the halliards to haul down

the American flag. But it would seem that the good genius which had watched over that starry banner throughout the war was loath to see it disgraced; for the officer had hardly finished his work, when a grape-shot from his own ship struck him, and he fell dead.

The noise of the battle had by this time died away, and the fresh breezes soon carried off the smoke that enveloped the combatants. It was an awful scene thus exposed to view. On the "Chesapeake" were sixty-one killed, and eighty-five wounded men. On the "Shannon" were thirty-three dead, and fifty wounded. On a cot in the wardroom lay Capt. Lawrence, his mortal wound having mercifully rendered him unconscious, so that he knew nothing of the loss of his ship. Broke had been made delirious by the fevered throbbing of the wound he had so long neglected. Everywhere were evidences of carnage and desolation.

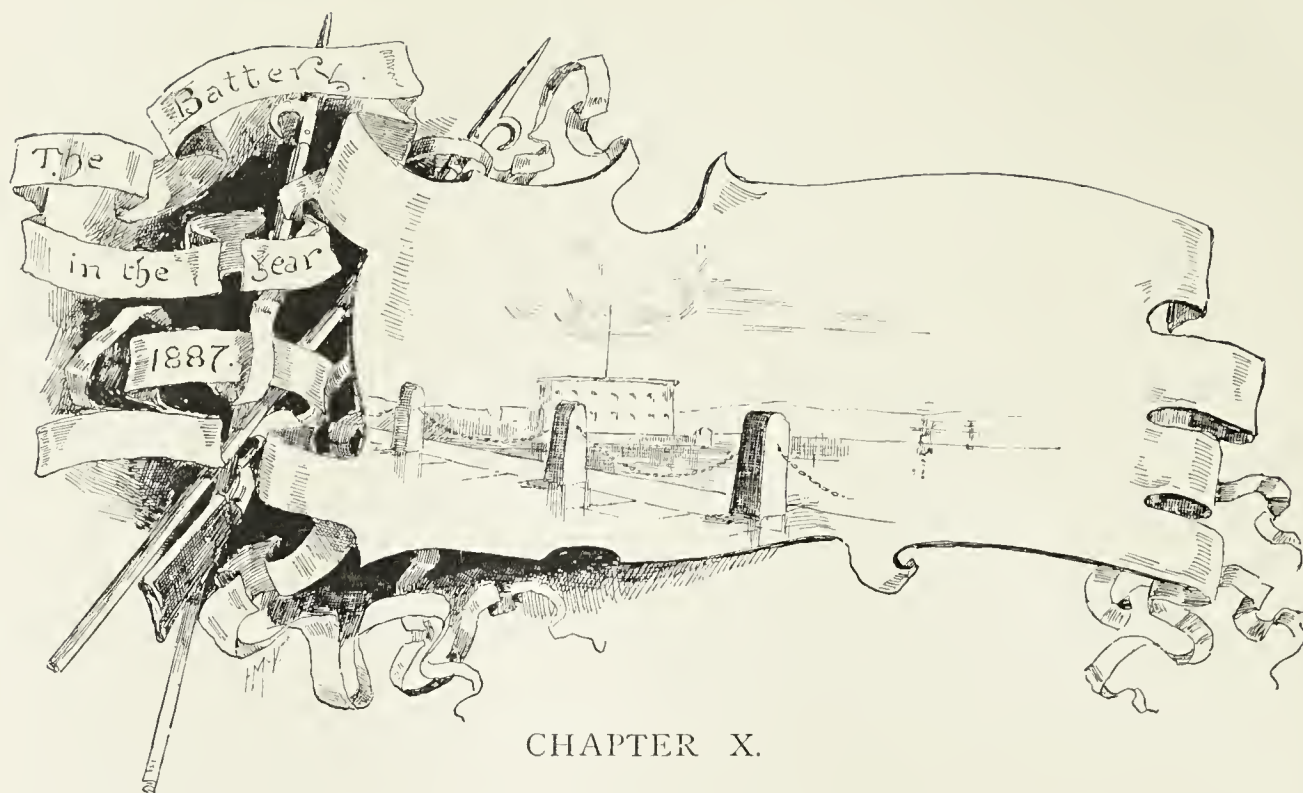
Little time was lost in getting the ships in order after the surrender. The noise of the hammer and saw was heard in every quarter. The wounded were taken to the sick-bay, and the bodies of the dead were committed to the ocean. Floods of water and the heavy holystones took from the decks the stains of blood. The galley cooks marched up and down the decks, sprinkling hot vinegar with a lavish hand. The British prize-crew took possession of the captured ship, and in a few hours the captor and captive were well on their way toward Halifax.

They reached port on the 7th of June; and the sight of the "Shannon," followed by the "Chesapeake" with the British ensign flying proudly over the stars and stripes, stirred the little city to the utmost enthusiasm. As the two ships pursued their stately course up the harbor, the British men-of-war on all sides manned their yards, and fired salutes in honor of the victory. The thunders of the cannon brought the town's-people to the water-side, and their cheers rang out lustily to welcome their conquering countrymen to port.

Capt. Lawrence had died the day before; and his body, wrapped in an American flag, lay on the quarter-deck of his frigate. Three days later, his body, with that of his gallant lieutenant Ludlow, was laid to rest with imposing naval honors, in the churchyard of Halifax. But his

country, honoring him even in the day of his defeat, was not content that his body should lie in the soil of an enemy's country. Two months after the battle, an American vessel, the "Henry" of Salem, entered the harbor of Halifax, under cover of a flag of truce, and took on board the bodies of Lawrence and Ludlow. They were conveyed first to Salem and later to New York, where they now lie under a massive monument of sandstone, in a corner of Trinity churchyard. A few feet away, the ceaseless tide of human life rolls on its course up and down Broadway; few of the busy men and women pausing to remember that in the ancient churchyard lies the body of the man whose dying words, "Don't give up the ship," were for years the watchword and motto of the United States navy.





CHAPTER X.

CRUISE OF THE "ESSEX."—A RICH PRIZE.—THE MYSTERIOUS LETTER.—CAPE HORN ROUNDED.—CAPTURE OF A PERUVIAN PRIVATEER.—AMONG THE BRITISH WHALERS.—PORTER IN COMMAND OF A SQUADRON.—A BOY COMMANDER.—THE SQUADRON LAYS UP AT NOOKAHEEVAH.



WHILE the events related in the two preceding chapters were occurring along the American coast, a few gallant vessels were upholding the honor of the stars and stripes in far distant lands. To cruise in waters frequented by an enemy's merchantmen, and capture, burn, sink, and destroy, is always a legitimate occupation for the navy of a belligerent nation. Yet the nation suffering at the hands of the cruisers invariably raises the cry of "wanton vandalism and cruelty," and brands the officers to whom falls so unpleasant a duty with the name of pirates. Such was the outcry raised against Paul Jones in the Revolutionary war; so it was the British described the brilliant service of the little brig "Argus" in 1813; and so the people of the North regarded the career of the "Alabama" and other Confederate cruisers in the great war for the Union. But perhaps no ship

had ever a more adventurous career, or wrought more damage to the enemy's commerce, than the United States frigate "Essex," under the command of the able officer David Porter.

Of the circumstances which led to the famous cruise of the "Essex," some account has already been given. With a full crew, and stores enough to enable her to keep the sea for some months, the ship set sail from the Delaware in the autumn of 1812, and headed to the southward with the intention of joining the "Constitution" and "Hornet" at some point in the tropics. Her first point of call was at Porto Praya, a harbor in the Cape Verd Islands. To the captain's disappointment, he could learn nothing of Bainbridge at this place; and he soon departed, after scrupulously exchanging salutes with a rickety little fort, over which floated the flag of Portugal. Continuing her southward way, the "Essex" crossed the equator, on which occasion the jolly tars enjoyed the usual ceremonies attendant upon crossing the line. Father Neptune and his faithful spouse, with their attendant suite, came aboard and superintended the operation of shaving and dowsing the green hands, whose voyages had never called them before into the Southern seas. Capt. Porter looked upon the frolic indulgently. He was well known as a captain who never unnecessarily repressed the light-heartedness of his crew. Two hours daily were set aside during which the crew were free to amuse themselves in any reasonable way. At four o'clock every afternoon, the shrill piping of the boatswain's whistle rang through the ship, followed by the cry, "D'ye hear there, fore and aft? All hands skylark!" No order ever brought a quicker response, and in a minute the decks became a perfect pandemonium. The sailors rushed here and there, clad in all sorts of clothes; boxed, fenced, wrestled; ran short foot-races; played at leap-frog, and generally comported themselves like children at play. Fights were of common occurrence; and the two combatants soon became the centre of an interested ring of spectators, who cheered on their favorites with loud eries of "Go it, Bill. Now, Jack, lively with yer left." But a sailor has no better friend to-day than the man he fought yesterday; and the fights, like the play, only kept the crew in good spirits and contentment.

The day after crossing the equator, the "Essex" sighted a sail and gave chase. Towards evening the frigate had gained greatly upon the stranger, and Porter displayed all the British signals which he had in his possession. The chase made no response, but set a British ensign. By nine o'clock, the "Essex" was within musket-shot, and could easily have blown the fugitive out of water; but this Porter was loath to do, as he desired to take the brig without doing her any injury. However, as she showed no signs of surrendering, he ordered the marines to give her a volley of musketry. One man on the chase was killed, and a number wounded, upon which her flag was immediately hauled down. She proved to be the British packet "Nocton" of ten guns. In her hold was found fifty-five thousand dollars in specie, which was at once taken on board the "Essex;" and the "Nocton" was sent to the United States under the charge of a prize-crew. Before she could make a port, she fell in with a British man-of-war, and was captured after a few hours' chase.

Two days after parting with the "Nocton," the "Essex" hove in sight of the Island of Fernando Noronha, off the coast of Brazil. For a time the frigate abandoned her warlike character, battened down her ports, housed her guns, hid her large crew between decks, and sailed into the little harbor looking like a large but peaceable British merchantman. An officer clad in plain clothes went ashore, and, meeting the governor, stated that the ship was the "Fanny" of London, bound for Rio Janeiro. During the conversation, the governor remarked that His British Majesty's ships, the "Acosta" forty-four, and the "Morgiana" twenty, had but recently sailed from the port, and had left a letter for Sir James Yeo, requesting that it be forwarded to England as soon as possible. With this news, the lieutenant returned to the ship. On hearing his report, Porter at once surmised that the letter might have been left for him by Commodore Bainbridge; and he at once sent the officer back, bearing the message that the "Fanny" was soon going to London, and her captain would see the letter delivered to Sir James Yeo, in person. The unsuspecting governor accordingly delivered up the epistle, and it was soon in Porter's hands. The note read as follows:—

MY DEAR MEDITERRANEAN FRIEND, — Probably you may stop here. Don't attempt to water: it is attended with too many difficulties. I learned, before I left *England*, that you were bound to Brazil coast. If so, perhaps we may meet at St. Salvador or at Rio Janeiro. I should be happy to meet and converse on our old affairs of captivity. Recollect our secret in those times.

Your friend of His Majesty's ship "Acosta,"

KERR.

Sir JAMES YEO of His British Majesty's ship "Southampton."

Porter read and pondered over this perplexing letter. He felt sure that the letter was from Bainbridge; and in the allusion to St. Salvador and Rio Janeiro, he perceived the commodore's wish for a rendezvous at one of those places. But what could be the secret of the times of captivity? Suddenly a thought struck him. Might there not be something written in sympathetic ink? Hurriedly calling for a candle, he held the letter above its flame, and saw, under the influence of the heat, words and sentences appearing where before all was blank paper.

"I am bound off St. Salvador," it read; "thence off Cape Frio, where I intend to cruise until the 1st of January. Go off Cape Frio to the northward of Rio, and keep a lookout for me."

That afternoon the governor of the island, looking out toward the harbor, was surprised to see the "Fanny" standing out under a full spread of canvas. Porter had gained all the information that he wished, and was off in search of his consorts. This search he continued until the 20th of January, cruising up and down off the Brazilian coast, and taking one or two small prizes. In this unprofitable service the ship's stores were being rapidly consumed. Among other things, the supply of rum began to run short; and in connection with this occurred a curious incident, that well illustrates the character of sailors. The daily rations of bread were reduced one-half, and the rations of salt meat one-third, without a word of remonstrance from the patient crew. Next the discovery was made that the rum was giving out, and a proportional reduction in the rations of grog was duly ordered. The jackies put in a vigor-

ous and immediate protest. They were prepared, they said, to go without grog, should the supply of rum be unhappily exhausted; but so long as any of the precious fluid remained, their rations of grog should not be curtailed. But to this Porter would not accede, fearing that, should the men be altogether deprived of their grog, the health of the crew might suffer. Accordingly, when the crew were piped to "splice the main brace" the next day, they were told that half rations only would be issued; and, if the grog was not taken up in fifteen minutes, the tub would be overturned, and the rum spilled into the sea. So dire a threat was too much for the rebellious seamen: they sprang into line, with their tin cups, and drew their curtailed rations without more ado.

Some days after this occurrence, the "Essex" overhauled a Portuguese vessel, from the captain of which Porter learned that an American frigate had shortly before fought and sunk an English frigate off the coast of Brazil; also, that it was rumored that an American corvette of twenty-two guns had been brought into Rio, a prize to a British seventy-four. This intelligence placed Capt. Porter in some perplexity. He felt convinced that the successful American frigate was the "Constitution;" a conjecture in which he was correct, for the news referred to the celebrated action of that ship with the "Java." The captured American corvette, he concluded, must be the "Hornet;" but herein the captain was wrong, for the "Hornet" was at that moment blockading the "Bonne Citoyenne."

Porter now found it necessary to decide upon a course of action. The news which he had received made it appear most improbable that he would fall in with either of the United States vessels for which he was seeking. He was far from home, cruising in seas much frequented by British men-of-war. There were no naval stations or outposts belonging to the United States, into which he could put for protection or repairs; for then, as now, the nation ignored the necessity of such supply-stations. To return home was peculiarly distasteful to the captain, who had set sail with the intention of undertaking a long cruise. In this dilemma, he wasted but little time in thought. By rounding Cape Horn, he would carry the "Essex" into the Pacific Ocean, where British mcr-

chantmen abounded and men-of-war were few. It was an adventurous and a perilous expedition to undertake; but Porter, having decided upon it, wasted no time in getting under way. That very night he took his ship out of the snug harbor of St. Catherine's, and started upon his long voyage around the Horn.

A winter voyage around Cape Horn, even in the stoutest of ships, is an undertaking to be dreaded by the most courageous seamen. The "Essex" seemed to meet with more than her share of stormy weather. From the night when she set sail from St. Catherine's, until she dropped anchor in a harbor of the Island of Mocha, almost every day witnessed a struggle for supremacy between the raging ocean on the one side, and skilful seamanship and nautical science on the other. Capt. Porter, however, proved himself ready for every emergency. No peril of the deep was unforeseen, no ounce of prevention unprovided. The safety of his ship, and the health of his men, were ever in his thoughts; and accordingly, when the "Essex" rounded into the Pacific Ocean, both men and ship were in condition to give their best service to the enterprise in which they were embarked.

After rounding Cape Horn, the "Essex" made her way northward along the desolate coast of Chili, until she reached the Island of Mocha. Here she anchored for a day, giving the crew a much needed run on shore, which they enjoyed with all the zest of schoolboys out for a day's holiday. The island afforded little in the way of fresh stores; but some pigs and horses were shot, and devoured with gusto by men who for over two months had not tasted fresh meat. From this point the frigate made for Valparaiso, and, after reconnoitring the port, put in for water and stores. The officers were received with much hospitality by the townspeople, and, after a few days' stay, were tendered a complimentary ball,—an entertainment into which the young officers entered with great glee. But, unhappily for their evening's pleasure, the dancing had hardly begun, when a midshipman appeared at the door of the hall, and announced that a large frigate was standing into the harbor. Deserting their fair partners, the people of the "Essex" hastened to their ship,

and were soon in readiness for the action; while the townspeople thronged the hills overlooking the sea, in the hopes of seeing a naval duel. But the frigate proved to be a Spaniard; and, of course, no action occurred.

The "Essex" remained several days at Valparaiso, and during her stay two or three American whalers put into the harbor. From the captains of these craft, Porter learned that the Peruvians were sending out privateers to prey upon American commerce, and that much damage had already been done by these marauders, who were no more than pirates, since no war existed between Peru and the United States. Porter determined to put an immediate stop to the operations of the Peruvian cruisers, and had not long to wait for an opportunity. A day or two after leaving Valparaiso, a sail was sighted in the offing, which was soon near enough to be made out a vessel-of-war, disguised as a whaler. Porter hung out the English ensign, and caused an American whaler, with which he had that morning fallen in, to hoist a British flag over the stars and stripes. At this sight, the stranger hoisted the Spanish flag, and threw a shot across the bow of the "Essex." Porter responded by a few shot that whizzed through the rigging just above the Spaniard's deck. The latter thereupon sent a boat to the "Essex;" and the officer who came aboard, thinking that he was on a British man-of-war, boasted of his ship's exploits among the American whalers. His vessel was the Peruvian privateer "Nereyda" of fifteen guns, and she had captured two American whalers, whose crews were even then in the hold of the privateer. He admitted that Peru had no quarrel with the United States, and no reason for preying upon her commerce. The confession, so unsuspectingly made, gave Porter ample grounds for the capture of the offending vessel. Curtly informing his astounded visitor that he was on a United States man-of-war, Porter ordered the gunners to fire two shots close to the privateer. This was done, and the Peruvian quickly hauled down his colors. The American officers, on boarding the prize, found twenty-three American sailors, who had been robbed of all that they possessed, stripped of half their clothing, and thrown into the hold.

These unfortunate men were released and sent to the "Essex;" after which all the guns and ammunition of the privateer were thrown overboard, and the vessel ordered to return to Callao.



THE PERUVIAN PRIVATEER.

After this act of summary justice, the "Essex" continued in her northward course. She touched at Callao; but, much to the disappointment of all on board, there were no British vessels among the shipping

at that port. Nor could the lookouts, for some days, discern from the masthead any craft other than the double-hulled rafts of logs, called catamarans, in which the natives along the Peruvian coast make long voyages. Weary of such continued ill-luck, Porter determined to make for the Galapagos Islands, where it was the custom of the British whaling-ships to rendezvous. But it seemed that ill-fortune was following close upon the "Essex;" for she sailed the waters about the Galapagos, and sent out boats to search small bays and lagoons, without finding a sign of a ship. Two weeks passed in this unproductive occupation, and Porter had determined to abandon the islands, when he was roused from his berth on the morning of April 29, 1813, by the welcome cry of "Sail, ho!"

All hands were soon on deck, and saw a large ship in the offing. All sail was clapped on the frigate; and she set out in hot pursuit, flying the British ensign as a ruse to disarm suspicion. As the chase wore on, two more sail were sighted; and Porter knew that he had fallen in with the long-sought whalers. He had no doubt of his ability to capture all three; for in those southern seas a dead calm falls over the ocean every noon, and in a calm the boats of the "Essex" could easily take possession of the whalers. By eight o'clock in the morning, the vessel first sighted was overhauled, and hove to in obedience to a signal from the frigate. She proved to be the "Montezuma," Capt. Baxter, with a cargo of fourteen hundred barrels of sperm-oil. Baxter visited Capt. Porter in his cabin, and sat there unsuspectingly, giving the supposed British captain information for his aid in capturing American ships. The worthy whaler little knew, as he chatted away, that his crew was being transferred to the frigate, and a prize-crew sent to take charge of the "Montezuma."

By noon the expected calm fell over the water; and the boats were ordered away to take possession of the two whalers, that lay motionless some eight miles from the "Essex." The distance was soon passed, and the two ships were ordered to surrender, which they quickly did, much astonished to find a United States man-of-war in that region. A breeze shortly after springing up, all the prizes bore down upon the frigate;

and the gallant lads of the "Essex" had the pleasure of seeing themselves surrounded with captured property to the value of nearly half a million dollars. One of the vessels, the "Georgiana," was a good sailer, strongly built, and well fitted for a cruiser. Accordingly she was armed with sixteen guns and a number of swivels, and placed under the command of Lieut. Downes. With this addition to his force, and with the other two prizes following in his wake, Porter returned to the Galapagos Islands. The first sight of the far-off peaks of the desert islands rising above the water was hailed with cheers by the sailors, who saw in the Galapagos not a group of desolate and rocky islands, but a place where turtle was plenty, and shore liberty almost unlimited. Porter remained some days at the islands, urging the crew of the "Essex," as well as the prisoners, to spend much time ashore. Signs of the scurvy were evident among the men, and the captain well knew that in no way could the dread disease be kept away better than by constant exercise on the sands of the seashore. The sailors entered heartily into their captain's plans, and spent hours racing on the beach, swimming in the surf, and wandering over the uninhabited islands.

After a few days of this sort of life, the squadron put to sea again. The "Georgianna" now separated from the fleet, and started on an independent cruise, with orders for a rendezvous at certain specific times. The "Essex" continued to hover about the Galapagos, in the hopes of getting a few more whalers. She had not long to wait; for the whale ship "Atlantic" soon fell in her way, and was promptly snapped up. The captain of this ship was a Nantucket man, who had deserted the flag of his country, to cruise under what he thought to be the more powerful flag of Great Britain. Great was his disgust to find that by his treachery he had lost all that he desired to protect. While in chase of the "Atlantic," a second sail had been sighted; and to this the "Essex" now gave chase. On being overhauled, the stranger at first made some show of fighting; but a shot or two from the guns of the frigate convinced him of the folly of this course, and he surrendered at discretion. The vessel proved to be the whale ship letter-of-marque

"Greenwich;" a stout ship, of excellent sailing qualities. She carried ten guns, and was in every way a valuable prize.

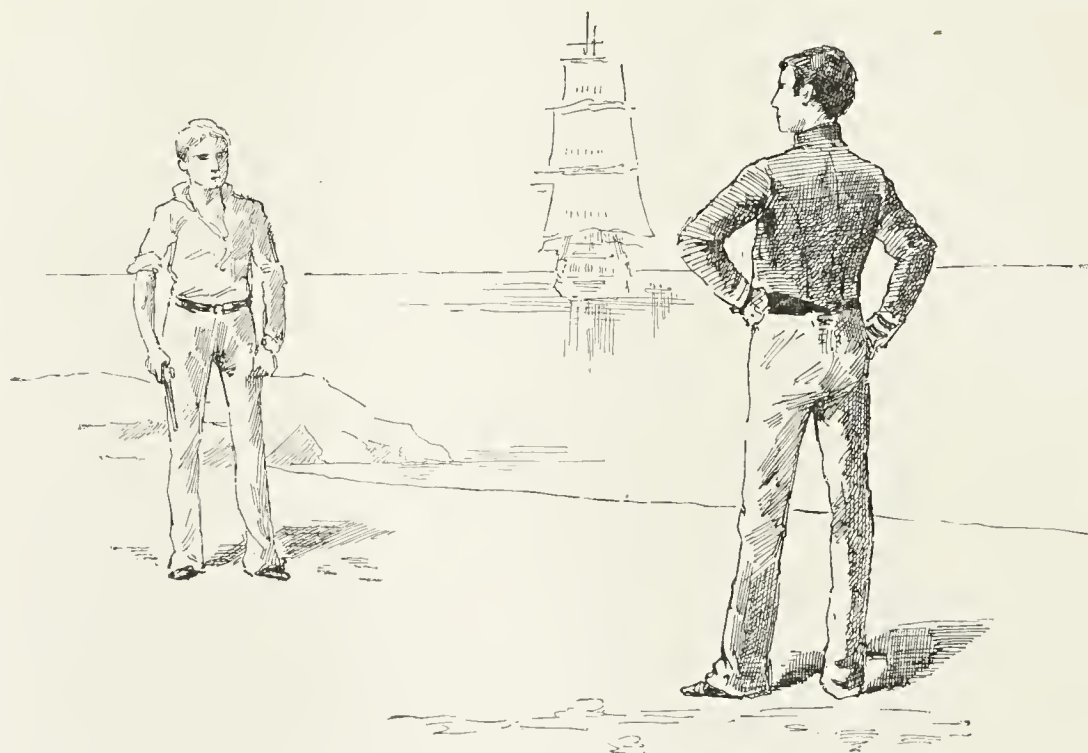
Porter had now been in the Pacific Ocean about three months. On the 24th of February, the "Essex," solitary defender of the flag of the United States in the Pacific, had turned her prow northward from Cape Horn, and embarked on her adventurous career in the most mighty of oceans. Now in May, Porter, as he trod the deck of his good ship, found himself master of a goodly squadron instead of one stanch frigate. The "Essex," of course, led the list, followed by the "Georgianna," sixteen guns, forty-two men; "Atlantic," six guns, twelve men; "Greenwich," ten guns, fourteen men; "Montezuma," two guns, ten men; "Policy," ten men. Of these the "Georgianna" had already received her armament and authority as a war-vessel; and the "Atlantic" showed such seaworthy qualities that Porter determined to utilize her in the same way. Accordingly he set sail for Tumbez, where he hoped to get rid of some of his prisoners, perhaps sell one or two of his prizes, and make the necessary changes in the "Atlantic." While on the way to Tumbez, a Spanish brig was overhauled. Her captain vastly edified Capt. Porter by informing him that the "Nereyda," a Peruvian privateer, had recently attacked a huge American frigate, and inflicted great damage upon the Yankee. But the frigate proving too powerful, the privateer had been forced to fly, and hastened her flight by throwing overboard all her guns and ammunition.

On the 19th of June, the "Essex" with her satellites cast anchor in the harbor of Tumbez. The first view of the town satisfied Porter that his hopes of selling his prizes there were without avail. A more squalid, dilapidated little seaside village, it would be hard to find. Hardly had the ships cast anchor, when the governor came off in a boat to pay a formal visit. Though clothed in rags, he had all the dignity of a Spanish hidalgo, and strutted about the quarter-deck with most laughable self-importance. Notwithstanding his high official station, this worthy permitted himself to be propitiated with a present of one hundred dollars; and he left the ship, promising all sorts of aid to the Americans.

Nothing came of it all, however; and Porter failed to dispose of any of his prizes. While the "Essex" with her train of captives lay in the harbor at Tumbez, the "Georgianna" came into port, and was greeted with three cheers by the men of the frigate. Lieut. Downes reported that he had captured three British ships, carrying in all twenty-seven guns and seventy-five men. One of the prizes had been released on parole, and the other two were then with the "Georgianna." This addition to the number of vessels in the train of the "Essex" was somewhat of an annoyance to Capt. Porter, who saw clearly that so great a number of prizes would seriously interfere with his future movements against the enemy. He accordingly remained at Tumbez only long enough to convert the "Atlantic" into an armed cruiser under the name of the "Essex Junior," and then set sail, in the hopes of finding some port wherein he could sell his embarrassing prizes. His prisoners, save about seventy-five who enrolled themselves under the American flag, were paroled, and left at Tumbez; and again the little squadron put to sea. The "Essex Junior" was ordered to take the "Hector," "Catherine," "Policy," and "Montezuma" to Valparaiso, and there dispose of them, after which she was to meet the "Essex" at the Marquesas Islands. On her way to the rendezvous, the "Essex" stopped again at the Galapagos Islands, where she was lucky enough to find the British whaler "Seringapatam," known as the finest ship of the British whaling fleet. By her capture, the American whalers were rid of a dangerous enemy; for, though totally without authority from the British Crown, the captain of the "Seringapatam" had been waging a predatory warfare against such luckless Americans as fell in his path. Porter now armed this new prize with twenty-two guns, and considered her a valuable addition to his offensive force. She took the place of the "Georgianna," which vessel Porter sent back to the United States loaded with oil.

Among the embarrassments which the care of so many prizes brought upon the leader of the expedition was the difficulty of finding commanding officers for all the vessels. This difficulty was enhanced while the flotilla lay off the Galapagos Islands; for two officers, falling into a dis-

pute, settled their quarrel, after the manner of the day, by a duel. In the contest one, a lieutenant, aged only twenty-one years, was killed, and now lies buried in the sands of the desolate and lonely island. After this occurrence, the need for commanding officers became so imperative that even the purser and chaplain of the "Essex" were pressed into the service. Midshipmen twelve or fourteen years old found themselves in



THE DUEL AT THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

command of ships. David Farragut was one of the boys thus suddenly promoted, and in his journal has left a description of his experience as a boy commander.

"I was sent as prize-master to the 'Barclay,'" he writes. "This was an important event in my life; and, when it was decided that I was to take the ship to Valparaiso, I felt no little pride at finding myself in command at twelve years of age. This vessel had been recaptured from a Spanish *guarda costa*. The captain and his mate were on board; and

I was to control the men sent from our frigate, while the captain was to navigate the vessel. Capt. Porter, having failed to dispose of the prizes as it was understood he intended, gave orders for the 'Essex Junior' and all the prizes to start for Valparaiso. This arrangement caused great dissatisfaction on the part of the captain of the 'Barclay,' a violent-tempered old fellow; and, when the day arrived for our separation from the squadron, he was furious, and very plainly intimated to me that I would 'find myself off New Zealand in the morning,' to which I most decidedly demurred. We were lying still, while the other ships were fast disappearing from view; the 'Commodore' going north, and the 'Essex Junior' with her convoy steering to the south for Valparaiso.

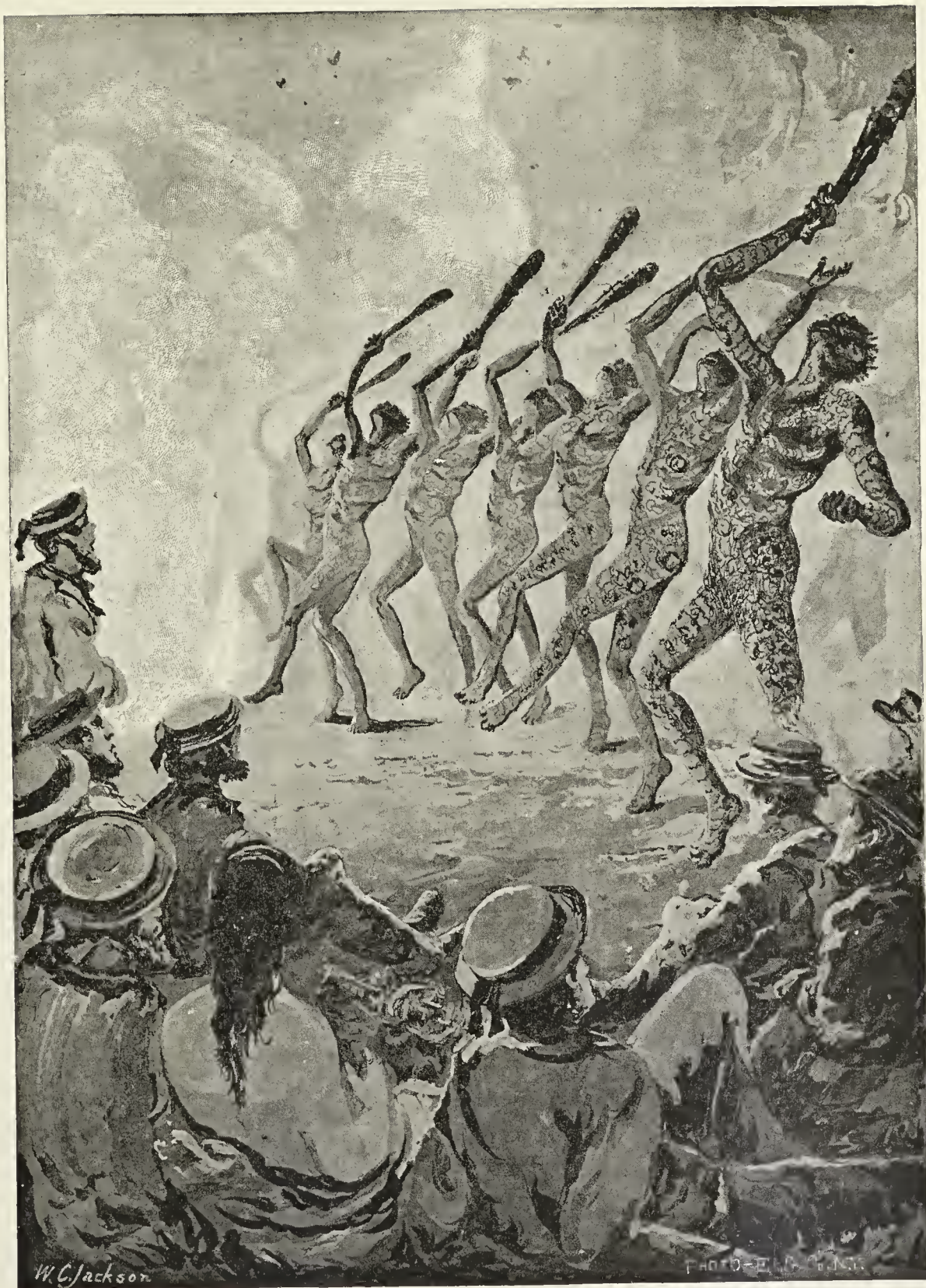
"I considered that my day of trial had arrived (for I was a little afraid of the old fellow, as every one else was). But the time had come for me at least to play the man: so I mustered up courage, and informed the captain that I desired the topsail filled away. He replied that he would shoot any man who dared to touch a rope without his orders; he 'would go his own course, and had no idea of trusting himself with a d—d nut-shell;' and then he went below for his pistols. I called my right-hand man of the crew, and told him my situation; I also informed him that I wanted the main topsail filled. He answered with a clear 'Ay, ay, sir!' in a manner which was not to be misunderstood, and my confidence was perfectly restored. From that moment I became master of the vessel, and immediately gave all necessary orders for making sail, notifying the captain not to come on deck with his pistols unless he wished to go overboard; for I would really have had very little trouble in having such an order obeyed."

On the 30th of September, the squadron fell in with the "Essex Junior," which had come from Valparaiso. Lieut. Downes reported that he had disposed of the prizes satisfactorily, and also brought news that the British frigate "Phoebe," and the sloops-of-war "Raccoon" and "Cherub," had been ordered to cruise the Pacific in search of the audacious "Essex." More than this, he secured statistics regarding the fleet of British whalers in the Pacific, that proved that Porter had completely

destroyed the industry, having left but one whaler uncaptured. There was then no immediate work for Porter to do; and he determined to proceed with his squadron to the Marquesas Islands, and there lay up, to make needed repairs and alterations.

The Marquesas are a desolate group of rocky islands lying in the Pacific Ocean, on the western outskirts of Oceanica. In formation they are volcanic, and rise in rugged mountain-peaks from the bosom of the great ocean. Sea-fowl of all sorts abound; but none of the lower mammals are to be found on the island, save swine which were introduced by Europeans. The people at the time of Porter's visit were simple savages, who had seldom seen the face of a white man; for at that early day voyagers were few in the far-off Pacific.

The island first visited by the "Essex" was known to the natives as Rooahooga. Here the frigate stopped for a few hours. During her stay, the water alongside was fairly alive with canoes and swimming natives. They were not allowed to come on board, but were immensely pleased by some fish-hooks and bits of iron let down to them from the decks of the frigate. Not to be outdone in generosity, the islanders threw up to the sailors cocoanuts, fruits, and fish. A boat-crew of jackies that went ashore was surrounded by a smiling, chattering throng of men, women, and children, who cried out incessantly, "*Taya, taya*" (friend, friend), and strove to bargain with them for fruits. They were a handsome, intelligent-looking people; tall, slender, and well formed, with handsome faces, and complexion little darker than that of a brunette. The men carried white fans, and wore bracelets of human hair, with necklaces of whales' teeth and shells about their necks, — their sole articles of clothing. Both men and women were tattooed; though the women seemed to content themselves with bands about the neck and arms, while the men were elaborately decorated from head to foot. Though some carried clubs and lances, they showed no signs of hostility, but bore themselves with that simple air of hospitality and unconscious innocence common to all savage peoples of tropical regions, uncorrupted by association with civilized white men.



THE WAR DANCE.

Porter remained but a short time at this island, as its shallow bays afforded no safe anchorage for the vessels. But, charmed as he was with the friendly simplicity of the natives, he determined to remain some time in the vicinity, provided safe anchorage could be found. This essential was soon discovered at Nookaheevah, where the ships cast anchor in a fine harbor, which Porter straightway dubbed Massachusetts Bay. Hardly had the ship anchored, when a canoe containing three white men came alongside, and was ordered away by the captain, who thought them deserters from some vessel. The canoe then returned to the shore, and the three whites were joined by a vast assemblage of armed natives. Porter now began to fear lest he had offended the natives, and proceeded at once to the beach, with four boats well armed and manned. But, by the time the boats' prows grated upon the white sand, every native had disappeared; and the sole figure visible was that of a young man, who advanced, and, giving a formal naval salute, announced himself as Midshipman John M. Maury, U.S.N. Porter was greatly surprised to find a midshipman in so strange a place; but the latter explained it by stating that he was on furlough, and had been left there by a merchant-vessel, which was to call for him. She had never returned, however, and he now hailed the "Essex" as an opportunity for escape. A second white man, who then put in an appearance, naked and tattooed like an Indian, proved to be an Englishman who had been on the island for years, and who, by his knowledge of the language and character of the natives, proved of great assistance to the Americans, during the long stay upon which Capt. Porter had determined.





CHAPTER XI.

WAR WITH THE SAVAGES.—THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE TYPEES.—DEPARTURE FROM NOOKAHEEVAH.—THE "ESSEX" ANCHORS AT VALPARAISO.—ARRIVAL OF THE "PHCEBE" AND "CHERUB."—THEY CAPTURE THE "ESSEX."—PORTER'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE "SATURN."—THE MUTINY AT NOOKAHEEVAH.

IT was now the last of October, 1813. Capt. Porter saw that the work he desired done upon the ships under his charge would occupy about six weeks, and he at once set about forming such relations of peace and amity with the natives as should enable him to procure the necessary supplies and prosecute his work unmolested. Much to his dismay, he had hardly begun his diplomatic palaver with the chiefs, when he learned that to keep one tribe friendly he must fight its battles against all other tribes on the island. The natives of Nookaheevah were then divided into a large number of tribal organizations. With three of these the Americans were brought into contact,—the Happahs, the Taechs, and the Typees. The Taechs lived in the fertile valley about the bay in which the American squadron was anchored. With these people Porter treated first, and made his appearance in their village in great state, being accompanied by the band, the marines, and several boats' crews of jackies. He was hospitably received by the natives, who crowded about to listen to the band, and wonder at the military precision of the marines, whom they regarded as supernatural beings.

Gattanewa, the chief, expressed his abounding love for the captain, and exchanged names with him, after the custom of the people ; but ended by saying that the lawless Happahs were at war with the Taeahs, and the Americans, to gain the friendship of the latter tribe, must make common cause with them against their enemies. To this Porter demurred, but the wily chief thereupon brought forward a most conclusive argument. He said that the Happahs had cursed his mother's bones ; and that, as he and Porter had exchanged names, that estimable woman was the captain's mother also, and the insult to her memory should be avenged. It is probable that even this argument might have proved unavailing, had not the Happahs the next night descended upon the valley, and, having burned two hundred bread-fruit trees, departed, leaving word that the Americans were cowards, and dared not follow them into their mountain fastnesses. Porter saw that his food supplies were in danger from these vandals, and his knowledge of savage character convinced him that he could have no peace with any of the natives until the insolence of this tribe was punished. Accordingly he notified the Taeahs, that, if they would carry a gun to the top of one of the mountain peaks, he would send a party against the Happahs. The Taeahs eagerly agreed ; and, after seeing the gun fired once or twice (a sight that set them fondling and kissing it, to show their reverence for so powerful a weapon), they set off up the steep mountain sides, tugging the gun after them. Lieut. Downes led the American forces. They had hardly reached the mountain tops, when the fighting began. The Happahs were armed with spears, and with slings, from which they threw heavy stones with terrific velocity. They seemed to know no fear, and stood gallantly before the advancing Americans, fairly darkening the air with clouds of stones and spears. The Americans, though few in number, — forty, opposed to nearly four thousand savages, — pressed forward, suffering but little from the weapons of their foes. From the deck of his frigate in the bay, Porter could see the steady advances of his forces, as they drove the Happahs from peak to peak. Before the Americans a huge native strode along, waving wildly the American flag. The howitzer came in the rear, and

was every now and then discharged, to drive the foe from some formidable stronghold. So ignorant of fire-arms were the enemy, that they had no idea of their power, often fighting until the muzzle of a musket was laid to their temples before the discharge. But before nightfall this war-like spirit was broken, and the victors returned to their ships, their native



FIRING THE HOWITZER.

allies carrying five dead bodies slung on poles. Two only of the Americans were wounded. The next day Happah ambassadors came to sue for peace; and soon every tribe on the island joined the alliance, save the Typees, and a distant tribe that proudly bore the unpronounceable name of Hatecaaheottwohos. For two or three weeks peace reigned undisturbed. Work was pushed on the vessels. The rats with which the "Essex" was infested were smoked out, an operation that necessitated the division of the crew between the shore and the other vessels. Porter

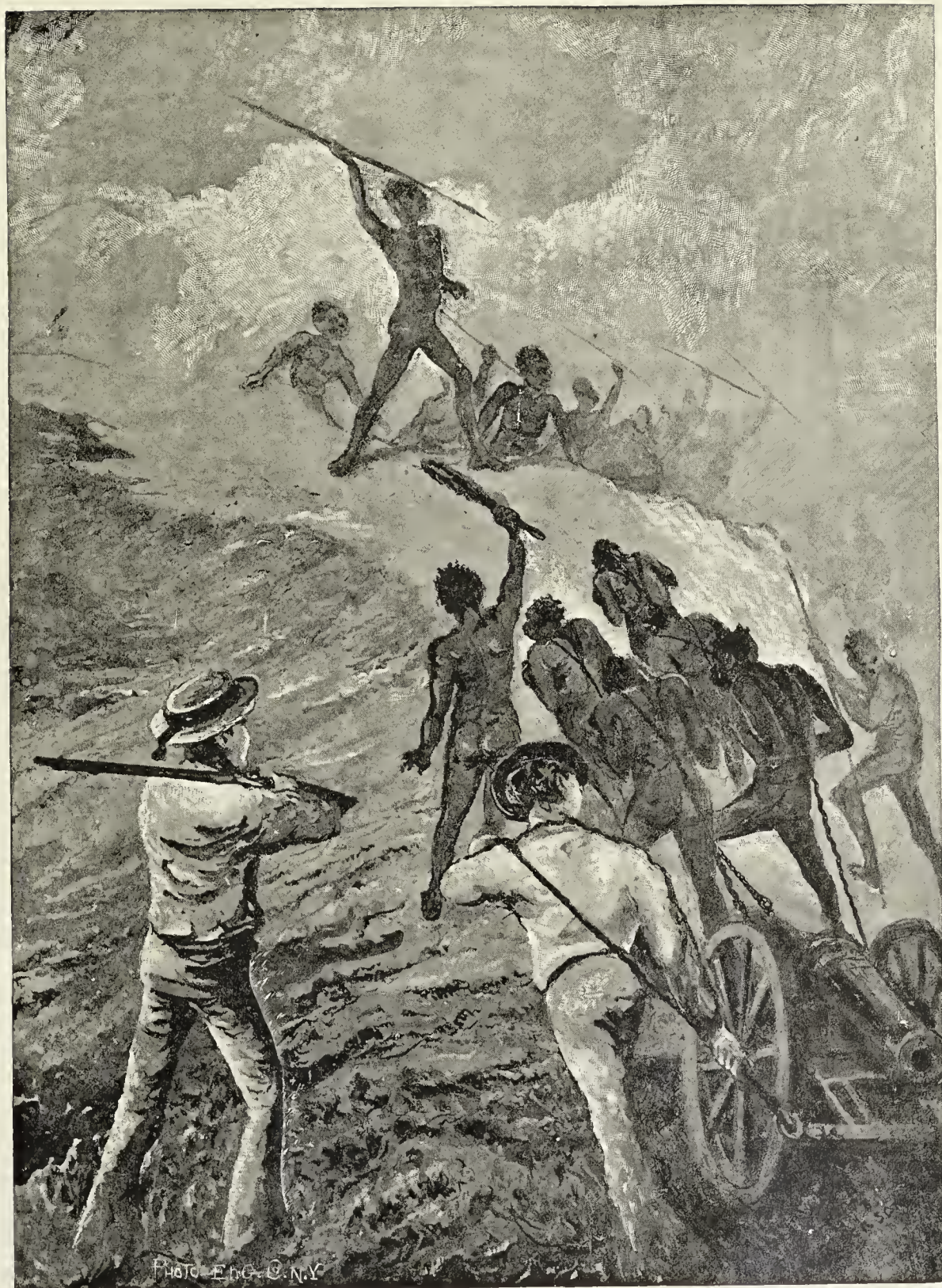
himself, with his officers, took up his quarters in a tent pitched on the shore. Under some circumstances, such a change would have been rather pleasant than otherwise; but the rainy season had now come on, and the tent was little protection against the storms. Noticing this, the natives volunteered to put up such buildings as the captain desired, and proceeded to do so in a most expeditious manner. At early dawn four thousand men set about the work, and by night had completed a walled village, containing a dwelling-house for the captain, another for his officers, a cooper's shop, hospital, bake-house, guard-house, and a shed for the sentinel to walk under. For their services the men received old nails, bits of iron hoop, and other metal scraps, with which they were highly delighted. The Americans were then living on the terms of the most perfect friendship with the natives. Many of the jackies had been taken into the families of the islanders, and all had formed most tender attachment for the beautiful island women; who, in their turn, were devoted to the "Malleekees," who were such mighty men of war, and brought them such pretty presents of beads and whales' teeth. The Americans entered into the celebrations and festivities of the islanders, watched their dances, joined their fishing expeditions, and soon were on the friendliest footing with their dusky hosts.

But so pleasant and peaceful an existence was not destined to continue long. The Typees, who inhabited the interior of the island, were beginning to stir up strife against the Americans; and Porter saw that their insolence must be crushed, or the whole native population would unite in war against him. But to begin a war with the Typees was far from Porter's wish. The way to their country lay over rugged precipices and through almost impenetrable jungles. The light-footed natives could easily enough scale the peaks, or thread the forests; but to Porter's sailors it would be an exhausting undertaking. No artillery could be taken into the field, and the immense number of natives that might be arrayed against the sailors made the success of the expedition very uncertain. Porter, therefore, determined to try to adjust the difficulty amicably, and with this purpose sent an ambassador to the Typees,

proposing a peaceful alliance. The reply of the natives is an amusing example of the ignorant vainglory of savage tribes, unacquainted with the power of civilized peoples. The Typees saw no reason to desire the friendship of the Americans. They had always got along very well without it. They had no intention of sending hogs or fruit to sell to the Americans. If the Americans wanted supplies, let them come and take them. The Americans were cowards, white lizards, and mere dirt. The sailors were weaklings, who could not climb the Nookaheevan hills without aid from the natives. This, and much more of the same sort, was the answer of the Typees to Porter's friendly overtures.

This left no course open to the Americans save to chastise the insolent barbarians. The departure of the expedition was, however, delayed until a fort could be built for the protection of the American village. This work, a sand-bag battery, calculated to mount sixteen guns, was completed on the 14th of November, and preparations for the expedition were then begun. And, indeed, it was time that the Americans showed that they were not to be insulted with impunity. Already the Taeahs and Happahs were beginning to wonder at the delay, and rumors spread about the village that the whites were really the cowards for which the Typees took them. One man, a chief among the Happahs, was rash enough to call Porter a coward to his face; whereat the choleric captain seized a gun, and, rushing for the offender, soon brought him to his knees, the muzzle of the weapon against his head, begging for mercy. That man was ever after Porter's most able ally among the natives.

The preparations for war with the Typees were completed, and the expedition was about to set out, when a new difficulty arose, this time among the white men. First, a plot was discovered among the British prisoners for the recapture of the "Essex Junior." Their plan was to get the crew drunk, by means of drugged rum, and then rise, seize the vessel, and make off while the American forces were absent on the Typee expedition. This plot, being discovered, was easily defeated; and the leaders were put in irons. Then Porter discovered that disaffection had spread among his crew, which, for a time, threatened serious consequences.



THE FIGHT AT NOOKAHEEVAH.

But this danger was averted by the captain's manly actions and words, which brought the jackies to his side as one man.

On the 28th of November the long-deferred expedition against the Typees left the snug quarters on the shore of Massachusetts Bay. The expedition went by sea, skirting the shore of the island, until a suitable landing-place near the territory of the hostile tribe was reached. The "Essex Junior" led the way, followed by five boats full of men, and ten war-canoes filled with natives, who kept up an unearthly din with discordant conches. When the forces landed, the friendly natives were seen to number at least five thousand men; while of the Americans, thirty-five, under the command of Capt. Porter, were considered enough for the work in hand. From the time the fighting began, the friendly natives kept carefully in the rear, and seemed to be only waiting to aid the victors, whether they should be Americans or Typees.

Capt. Porter and his followers, upon landing, sat down upon the beach for breakfast; but their repast was rudely disturbed by a shower of stones from an ambuscade of Typees in the edge of the wood. Stopping but a moment to finish their food, the jackies picked up their cutlasses and muskets, and started for the enemy. They were soon in the shady recesses of the tropical forest, but not a Typee was to be seen. That the enemy was there, however, was amply attested by the hail of stones that fell among the invaders, and the snapping of slings that could be heard on all sides. This was a kind of fighting to which the sailors were not accustomed; and for a moment they wavered, but were cheered on by their brave leader, and, pushing through the woods, came to a clearing on the banks of a narrow river. But here a sad disaster befell them in the loss of Lieut. Downes, whose ankle was broken by a stone. He was sent back to the ship, with an escort of five men; and the party, thus reduced to twenty-nine, forded the river, and scaled its high bank, cheering lustily, under a heavy fire from the Typees, who made a dogged stand on the farther shore. By this time, the last of their savage allies had disappeared.

The advance of the Americans was now checked by a jungle of such

rank underbrush that the cutlasses of the men made no impression upon it; and they were forced to crawl forward on their hands and knees, under a constant fire from the enemy. From this maze, they burst out upon a clearing, and, looking about them, saw no sign of their savage foes, who had suddenly vanished. The solution of this mystery was soon discovered. After marching a few rods totally unmolested, a sudden turn in the path brought the Americans in sight of a formidable stone fortress, perched on a hill commanding the road, and flanked on either side by dense jungles. The wall of the fortress was of stone, seven feet high; and from it, and from the thickets on either side, came such demoniac yells, and such showers of stones, as convinced the Americans that they were in front of the Typee stronghold. For a time the invaders seemed in danger of annihilation. They were totally unprotected, and flanked by concealed foes, whose missiles were plunging down upon them with deadly effect. Some few secured places behind trees, and began a musketry fire; but the alarming cry soon arose that the ammunition was exhausted. Five men were immediately despatched to the beach for more cartridges, while the few remaining determined to hold their position at any cost. But to this determination they were unable to adhere. Had the Typees charged, the whole American force would have been swept away like driftwood before a springtime flood. But the savages neglected their opportunity; and the Americans first gained the protection of the bushes, then fell back across the river, and so to the beach.

Here a council of war was held. They had been beaten back by savages; enormously outnumbered, to be sure, but still opposed by undisciplined warriors armed with rude weapons. The stain of that defeat must be washed out by a victory. Upon one point, all were agreed. The Happaes had played them false by leading them over the most dangerous roads, and into ambushes of the enemy. To such treacherous guides, they would not again trust themselves. Before he again led his men to battle, Porter wished to try diplomacy. Although he knew that he had been beaten in the engagement, it would never do to confess defeat before so many savages (for the Tacees and Happaes

were now swarming about him, discussing the fight). Accordingly a messenger was sent to tell the Typees that a handful of white men had driven them into their fort, killing and wounding many. Now a large re-enforcement of white men was on the beach, ready to drive them from their valley, but that if they would sue for peace they might yet save their lives and their villages. At this the Typees laughed. "Tell Opotee," said they, "that we have plenty of men to spare; while his men are few. We have killed his chief warrior, and wounded many of his people. We are not afraid of his *bouhies* [muskets]: they often miss fire, and, when they wound, don't hurt much. If the Malleেকেes can drive us from our valley, why don't they come and do it?—not stay on the beach and talk."

When Porter received this letter, he knew that he must again take the field against the Typees, or his half-hearted allies would abandon him and join his foes, giving him endless trouble, and putting a stop to the refitting of the ships in Massachusetts Bay. He now understood the power of his foes, and accordingly chose two hundred men to go with him on the second expedition. He also determined to leave behind the friendly savages, whose friendship was a very doubtful quality. The forces left the beach that very night, and began their weary march up the mountain-side. It was bright moonlight; so that the narrow mountain paths, the fearful precipices, the tangled jungles, and the swamps and rivers were visible to the marching column. By midnight the Americans found themselves perched on the summit of a rocky peak overlooking the Typee valley, from which arose sounds of drum-beating, singing, and loud shouts of revelry. The guides who had led the American column said that the savages were rejoicing over their triumph, and were calling upon their gods to send rain and spoil the "Malleেকেes' *bouhies*." Porter knew the time was ripe for a surprise, and the men were eager to be led against the enemy; but the guides protested that no mortal men could descend the path leading to the Typee village, at night, so precipitous was the descent. The Americans were therefore forced to wait patiently until morning. Throwing themselves on the ground, the weary sailors were soon asleep, but were waked up in an hour by a heavy

burst of rain. They saw the rain falling in sheets, and the sky banked with black clouds that gave little hope of a stoppage. From the valley below rose the triumphant yells of the Typees, who were convinced that their gods had sent the shower to spoil the white men's weapons. And, indeed, the floods poured down as though sent for that very service; so that at daybreak the Americans found that more than half their powder was spoiled. To make matters worse, the precipitous path leading down into the valley was so slippery that it would have been madness to attempt the descent. Accordingly Porter determined to retreat to the Happah village, and there wait for better weather. Before falling back, however, he ordered a volley fired, to show the savages that the fire-arms were not yet useless. The noise of the volley was the first intimation to the Typees that the Americans were so near them, and their village was at once thrown into the direst confusion. Cries of surprise mingled with the beating of drums, the blowing of horns, the shrieks of women and children, and the squealing of pigs being driven to places of safety. In the midst of the tumult the Americans retired to the Happah village, where they spent the remainder of that day and the following night.

The next morning dawned bright and cool after the rain; and the Americans sallied forth, determined to end this annoying affray in short order. They soon reached their former station on the cliffs, and, looking down upon the Typee territory, saw a beautiful valley, cut up by stone walls into highly cultivated farms, and dotted with picturesque villages. But though their hearts may have been softened by the sight of so lovely a spot, so soon to be laid desolate, they were soon nerved to their work by a party of Typees, who were posted on the farther bank of a river that skirted the base of the cliff, and were calling out to the Americans, calling them cowards, and daring them to come down and fight. Porter gave the command; and the jackies were soon clambering down the cliffs, in the face of a rapid fire from their enemies. The bank of the river once gained, the Americans halted to rest for a few minutes, and then, fording the stream, pushed forward straight for the nearest village. The Typees hung upon the flank of the advancing column; now and then

making fierce charges, but always beaten back with severe losses. The sailors suffered but little, and were soon in possession of the village, behind the walls of which the main body halted, while scouting parties were sent out to reconnoitre. After a short halt at this point, the invaders pushed forward to the next village, and so on up the valley, burning each village as soon as it was captured. Undismayed by their continued reverses, the Typees fought doggedly, scornfully refusing to listen to the peaceful overtures made by the American commander. After marching three or four miles, and fighting for every foot of the way, the Americans found themselves before an extensive village, which, from its size, and the strength of its fortifications, was evidently the Typee capital. Here the savages made a last determined stand, but to no avail. The Americans poured over the wall, and were soon in possession of the town. The beauty of the village, the regularity of its streets, and the air of comfort and civilization everywhere apparent, made it hard for Porter to give the fateful order that should commit all to the flames. But his duty was clear, and the order was given. Leaving the blazing capital behind them, the sailors retraced their steps to the ships, having completed the devastation of the valley that a day before was so peaceful, fertile, and lovely. The spirit of the Typees was thoroughly broken by this crushing blow; and for the next few days the ships were besieged by ambassadors from all the island tribes, begging for peace.

Feeling assured that he should have no further trouble with the natives, Porter now exerted all his energies to complete the repairs on the ships, that he might again take the sea. So rapidly did the work progress, that by the 9th of December the "Essex" and "Essex Junior" were refitted, and stocked with fresh provisions of hogs, cocoanuts, and bananas; the "New Zealander," loaded with oil from the other prizes, was ordered to proceed to New York; while the "Greenwich," "Seringapatam," and "Hammond" were to remain at the islands until the "Essex" should return for them. These arrangements being made, the war-ships made ready to depart.

But now arose a difficulty, ludicrous in its cause, but which threatened

to be serious in its effects. The ships had been lying in harbor for about two months ; and during that time the sailors, with unlimited shore liberty, had made such ties as bound them closely to the native people. The young girls of the islands, with their comely faces and fair complexions, had played sad havoc with the hearts of the gallant tars of the "Essex ;" and deep was the grumbling among the sailors when they heard that the time had come for them to bid farewell to their sweethearts. No openly mutinous demonstration was made ; but so old a commander could not overlook the fact that some disaffection existed among his crew, and a little investigation disclosed the trouble. There could be no half-way measures adopted in the case, and Porter at once gave orders that all further intercourse with the shore should cease. That very night three sailors slipped into the sea, and swam ashore to meet their sweethearts ; but the wily captain had stationed a patrol upon the beach, and the three luckless Leanders were sent back to the ship in irons. All the next day the native girls lined the shore of the bay, and with pleading gestures besought the captain to let the sailors come ashore, but to no avail. Some fair maidens even swam off to the ship, but were gruffly ordered away by the officers. All this was very tantalizing to the men, who hung over the bulwarks, looking at the fair objects of their adoration. But one man only showed signs of rebellion against the captain's authority ; and Porter, calling him out before the crew, rebuked him, and sent him ashore in a native canoe : while the rest of the jackies sprang into the rigging, set the canvas, and the ship soon left the island, with its sorrowing nymphs, far in her wake.

The two vessels turned their heads toward Valparaiso, and made the port after an uneventful voyage of fifty-six days. The frigate entered the harbor at once, and cast anchor ; while the "Essex Junior" was ordered to cruise about outside, keeping a close watch for the enemy's ships. The friendship of the people of the town seemed as great as during the first visit of the frigate to the port ; and a series of entertainments was begun, that culminated in a grand ball upon the "Essex" on the night of the 7th of February, 1814. For that one night the officers of the "Essex Junior"

were absolved from their weary duty of patrolling the sea at the mouth of the harbor. The vessel was anchored at a point that commanded a view of the ocean; and her officers, arrayed in the splendor of full dress, betook themselves on board of the frigate. At midnight, after an evening of dancing and gayety, Lieut. Downes left the "Essex," and returned to his vessel, which immediately weighed anchor and put to sea. The festivities on the frigate continued a little time longer; and then, the last ladies having been handed down the gangway, and pulled ashore, the work of clearing away the decorations began. While the ship's decks were still strewn with flags and flowers, while the awnings still stretched from stem to stern, and the hundreds of gay lanterns still hung in the rigging, the "Essex Junior" was seen coming into the harbor with a signal flying. The signal quartermaster rushed for his book, and soon announced that the flags read, "Two enemy's ships in sight." At this moment more than half the crew of the "Essex" were on shore; but a signal set at the ship's side recalled the men, and in an hour and a half the ship was ready for action; while the "Essex Junior" cast anchor in a supporting position.

The two strange vessels were the "Cherub" and the "Phœbe," British men-of-war. They rounded into the harbor about eight A.M., and bore down towards the American ships. The "Phœbe," the larger of the two Englishmen, drew close to the "Essex;" and her commander, Capt. Hillyar, sprang upon the taffrail, and asked after Capt. Porter's health. Porter responded courteously; and, noticing that the "Phœbe" was coming closer than the customs of war-vessels in a neutral port permitted, warned the Englishman to keep his distance, or trouble would result. Hillyar protested that he meant no harm, but nevertheless continued his advance until the two ships were almost fouled. Porter called the boarders to the bow; and they crowded forward, armed to the teeth, and stripped for the fight. The "Phœbe" was in such a position that she lay entirely at the mercy of the "Essex," and could not bring a gun to bear in her own defence. Hillyar, from his position on the taffrail, could see the American boarders ready to spring at the word of command,

and the muzzles of the cannon ready to blow the ship out of water. There is little doubt that he was astonished to find the "Essex" so well prepared for the fray, for he had been told that more than half her crew had gone ashore. Relying upon this information, he had probably planned to capture the "Essex" at her moorings, regardless of the neutrality of the port. But he had now brought himself into a dangerous position, and Porter would have been justified in opening fire at once. But the apologies and protestations of the British captain disarmed him, and he unwisely let the "Phœbe" proceed unmolested.

In his journal, Farragut thus describes this incident: "We were all at quarters, and cleared for action, waiting with breathless anxiety for the command from Capt. Porter to board, when the English captain appeared, standing on the after-gun, in a pea-jacket, and in plain hearing said, —

"'Capt. Hillyar's compliments to Capt. Porter, and hopes he is well.'

"Porter replied, 'Very well, I thank you. But I hope you will not come too near, for fear some accident might take place which would be disagreeable to you.' And, with a wave of his trumpet, the kedje-anchors went up to our yard-arms, ready to grapple the enemy.

"Capt. Hillyar braced back his yards, and remarked to Porter, that, if he did fall aboard him, he begged to assure the captain that it would be entirely accidental.

"'Well,' said Porter, 'you have no business where you are. If you touch a rope-yarn of this ship, I shall board instantly.'"

Notwithstanding Porter's forbearance, the incident came near leading to a battle, through the action of one of the crew, who had come off from shore with his brain rather hazy from heavy drinking. This man was standing by a gun, with a lighted brand in his hand, ready to fire the piece, when he thought he saw an Englishman grinning at him through one of the open ports of the "Phœbe." Highly enraged, he shouted out, "My fine fellow, I'll soon stop your making faces!" and reached out to fire the gun; when a heavy blow from an officer, who saw the action, stretched him on the deck. Had that gun been fired, nothing could have saved the "Phœbe."

The two hostile ships cast anchor within long gun-shot of the Americans, and seemed prepared for a long season in port. For the next few weeks the British and American officers and seamen met frequently on shore; and a kind of friendship sprang up between them, although they were merely waiting for a favorable moment to begin a deadly strife. Some incidents, however, took place which rather disturbed the amicable relations of the two parties. At the masthead of the "Essex" floated a flag bearing the motto, "Free Trade and Sailors' Rights." This flag gave great offence to the British, who soon displayed a flag with the inscription, "God and Country, British Sailors' Best Rights. Traitors offend both." To this Americans responded with, "God, our Country and Liberty. Tyrants offend them." Here the debate closed, and seemed to arouse no unfriendly feeling; for Porter and Hillyar talked it over amicably on shore. In the course of this conversation, Porter challenged the "Phœbe" to meet the "Essex" alone; but Hillyar declined the proposition. Shortly after this, the crews of the hostile ships began the practice of singing songs *at* each other; the Americans beginning with "Yankee Doodle," while the British retorted with "God save the King." Then the poets of the forecastle set to work, and ground out verses that would prove particularly obnoxious to the enemy. One of the American songs recited at full length the capture of the "Guerriere." The character of the poetry may be judged by the first verse.

"Ye tars of our country, who seek on the main
The cause for the wrongs your country sustain,
Rejoice and be merry, for bragging John Bull
Has got a sound drubbing from brave Capt. Hull."

The British responded with triumphant verses upon the capture of the "Chesapeake," news of which had just reached Valparaiso. Their poetry was quite as bad.

"Brave Broke he waved his sword,
And he cried, 'Now, lads, aboard;
And we'll stop their singing,
Yankee Doodle Dandy, O!'"

Porter now wished to get rid of some of the prizes with which he was encumbered. He could not burn them in the harbor, and the British ships kept too close a watch upon him to permit his ships to leave the harbor for an hour: so he was forced to wait many days for an opportunity. On the 14th of February the opportunity came; and the "Hector" was towed out to sea, and set a-fire. Two weeks later, the "Phœbe" came alone to the mouth of the harbor, and, after showing her motto-flag, hove to, and fired a gun to windward. This Porter understood to be a challenge, and he at once put out in the "Essex." But the "Phœbe" had no intention of entering a fair and equal fight; for she quickly joined her consort, and the two then chased the "Essex" back to port. Much talk and a vast deal of correspondence grew out of this affair, which certainly did not redound to the credit of the British.

On the 28th of March the wind blew with such force that the larboard cable of the "Essex" parted; and the ship, drifting before the wind, dragged her starboard cable out to sea. Knowing that the British ships were in waiting outside, Porter lost no time in getting on sail and trying to beat back into the harbor. But, just as the ship was rounding the point, there came up a heavy squall, which carried away the main topmast, throwing several topmen into the sea. In her disabled state the frigate could not regain the harbor; but she ran into a little cove, and anchored within half pistol-shot of the shore. Here she was in neutral waters; and, had Capt. Hillyar been a man of his word, the "Essex" would have been safe: for that officer, on being asked by Porter whether he would respect the neutrality of the port, had replied with much feeling, "You have paid so much respect to the neutrality of the port, that I feel bound in honor to respect it." But he very quickly forgot this respect, when he saw his enemy lying crippled and in his power, although in neutral waters.

Hardly had the "Essex" cast anchor, when the two British ships drew near, their actions plainly showing that they intended to attack the crippled frigate. The "Essex" was prepared for action, the guns beat to quarters; and the men went to their places coolly and bravely, though each felt at

his heart that he was going into a hopeless fight. The midshipmen had hardly finished calling over the quarter-lists, to see that every man was at his station, when the roar of the cannon from the British ships announced the opening of the action. The "Phœbe" had taken up a position under the stern of the American frigate, and pounded away with her long eighteens; while the "Essex" could hardly get a gun to bear in return. The "Cherub" tried her fortune on the bow, but was soon driven from that position, and joined her consort. The two kept up a destructive fire, until Porter got three long guns out of the cabin-windows, and drove the enemy away. After repairing damages, the British took up a position just out of range of the "Essex's" carronades, and began a rapid and effective fire from their long eighteens.

Such an action as this was very trying to the crew of the "Essex." The carronades against which Porter had protested when his ship was armed were utterly useless against an enemy who used such cautious tactics. On the deck of the frigate men were falling on every side. One shot entered a port, and killed four men who stood at a gun, taking off the heads of the last two. The crash and roar of the flying shots were incessant. As the guns became crippled for lack of men, the junior officers took a hand in all positions. Farragut writes, "I performed the duty of captain's aid, quarter-gunner, powder-boy, and, in fact, did every thing that was required of me. . . . When my services were not required for other purposes, I generally assisted in working a gun; would run and bring powder from the boys, and send them back for more, until the captain wanted me to carry a message; and this continued to occupy me during the action." Once during the action a midshipman came running up to Porter, and reported that a gunner had deserted his post. Porter's reply was to turn to Farragut (the lad was only twelve years old), and say, "Do your duty, sir." The boy seized a pistol, and ran away to find the coward, and shoot him in his tracks. But the gunner had slipped overboard, and made his way to the shore, and so escaped.

After the "Essex" had for some time suffered from the long-range fire of the enemy, Capt. Porter determined to make sail, and try to close

with his foes. The rigging had been so badly shot away that the flying jib was the only sail that could be properly set. With this, and with the other sails hanging loose from the yards, the "Essex" ran down upon the British, and made such lively play with her carronades, that the "Cherub" was forced to haul off for repairs, and the tide of war seemed to be setting in favor of the Americans. But, though the gallant blue-jackets fought with desperation, their chances for success were small. The decks were strewn with dead, the cock-pit was full, and the enemy's shot were constantly adding to the number of dead and dying. Young Farragut, who had been sent below after some gun-primers, was coming up the ladder, when a man standing at the opening of the hatchway was struck full in the face by a cannon-ball, and fell back, carrying the lad with him. The mutilated body fell full upon the boy, who lay for a time unconscious; then, jumping to his feet, ran, covered with blood, to the quarter-deck. Capt. Porter saw him, and asked if he was wounded. "I believe not, sir," answered the midshipman. "Then," said the captain, "where are the primers?" Farragut remembered his errand, and dashed below to execute it. When he emerged the second time, he saw the captain (his adopted father) fall, and running up asked if he was wounded. "I believe not, my son," was the response; "but I felt a blow on the top of my head." He had probably been knocked down by the wind of a passing shot.

But the end of the action was now near. Dreadful havoc had been made in the ranks of both officers and men. The cock-pit would hold no more wounded; and the shots were beginning to penetrate its walls, killing the sufferers waiting for the surgeon's knife. Lieut. McKnight was the only commissioned officer on duty. The ship had been several times on fire, and the magazine was endangered. Finally, the carpenter reported that her bottom was so cut up that she could float but a little while longer. On learning this, Porter gave the order for the colors to be hauled down, which was done. The enemy, however, kept up their deadly fire for ten minutes after the "Essex" had struck.

David Farragut narrates some interesting incidents of the surrender. He was sent by the captain to find and destroy the signal book before



CAPTURE OF THE ESSEX.

the British should come aboard; and, this having been done, he went to the cock-pit to look after his friends. Here he found Lieut. Cornell terribly wounded. When Farragut spoke to him, he said, "O Davy, I fear it's all up with me!" and died soon after. The doctor said, that, had this officer been operated upon an hour before, his life might have been saved; but when the surgeons proposed to drop another man, and attend to him, he replied, "No, no, doctor, none of that. Fair play's a jewel. One man's life is as dear as another's; I would not cheat any poor fellow out of his turn." Surely history nowhere records more noble generosity. Soon after this, when Farragut was standing on the deck, a little negro boy came running up to inquire about his master, Lieut. Wilmer, who had been knocked over by a shot. On learning his master's fate, he leaped over the taffrail into the sea, and was drowned.

After the "Essex" had been formally surrendered, boats were sent to convey the prisoners to the British ships. In one of these Farragut was carried to the "Phœbe," and there fell into a second battle, in which the victory remained with him. "I was so mortified at our capture that I could not refrain from tears," he writes. "While in this uncomfortable state, I was aroused by hearing a young reefer call out, —

"'A prize! a prize! Ho, boys, a fine grunter, by Jove.'

"I saw at once that he had under his arm a pet pig belonging to our ship, called 'Murphy.' I claimed the animal as my own.

"'Ah,' said he, 'but you are a prisoner, and your pig also!'

"'We always respect private property,' I replied; and, as I had seized hold of 'Murphy,' I determined not to let go unless 'compelled by superior force.'

"This was fun for the oldsters, who immediately sung out, —

"'Go it, my little Yankee. If you can thrash Shorty, you can have your pig.'

"'Agreed,' cried I.

"A ring was formed in an open space, and at it we went. I soon found that my antagonist's pugilistic education did not come up to mine. In fact, he was no match for me, and was compelled to give up the

pig. So I took Master Murphy under my arm, feeling that I had in some degree wiped out the disgrace of the defeat."

When the British ships with their prize returned to the quiet waters of the harbor, and began to take account of damages, it was found that the "Essex" had indeed fought a losing fight. On the "Phœbe," but four men were killed, and seven wounded; on the "Cherub," one killed and three wounded, made up the list of casualties. But on the "Essex" were fifty-eight killed, and sixty-six wounded; while an immense number of men were missing, who may have escaped to the shore or may have sunk beneath the waves. Certain it is some swimmers reached shore, though sorely wounded. One man had rushed on deck with his clothing all aflame, and swam ashore, though scarcely a square inch could be found on his body which was not burned. Another seaman had sixteen or eighteen scales of iron chipped from the muzzle of his gun driven into his legs, yet he reached the shore in safety.

After some delay, the "Essex Junior" was disarmed; and the prisoners, having given their paroles, were placed on board her, with a letter of safe-conduct from Capt. Hillyar to prevent their capture by any British man-of-war in whose path they might fall. But this letter availed them little; for, after an uneventful voyage to the northward, the "Essex Junior" found herself brought to by a shot from the British frigate "Saturn," off Sandy Hook. The boarding-officer took Capt. Hillyar's letter to the commander of the "Saturn," who remarked that Hillyar had no authority to make any such agreement, and ordered the "Essex Junior" to remain all night under the lee of the British ship. Capt. Porter was highly indignant, and handed his sword to the British officer, saying that he considered himself a prisoner. But the Englishman declined the sword, and was about to return to his ship, when Porter said, "Tell the captain that I am his prisoner, and do not consider myself any longer bound by my contract with Capt. Hillyar, which he has violated; and I shall act accordingly." By this Porter meant that he now considered himself absolved from his parole, and free to escape honorably if an opportunity should offer.

Accordingly at seven o'clock the following morning, a boat was stealthily lowered from the "Essex Junior;" and Porter, descending into it, started for the shore, leaving a message, that, since British officers showed so little regard for each other's honor, he had no desire to trust himself in their hands. The boat had gone some distance before she was sighted by the lookout on the "Saturn," for the hull of the "Essex Junior" hid her from sight. As soon as the flight was noticed, the frigate made sail in chase, and seemed likely to overhaul the audacious fugitives, when a thick fog set in, under cover of which Porter reached Babylon, L.I., nearly sixty miles distant. In the mean time, the "Essex Junior," finding herself hidden from the frigate by the fog-bank, set sail, and made for the mouth of the harbor. She was running some nine knots an hour when the fog showed signs of lifting; and she came up into the wind, that the suspicion of the British might not be aroused. As it happened, the "Saturn" was close alongside when the fog lifted, and her boat soon came to the American ship. An officer, evidently very irate, bounded upon the deck, and said brusquely, —

"You must have been drifting very fast. We have been making nine knots an hour, and yet here you are alongside."

"So it appears," responded the American lieutenant coolly.

"We saw a boat leave you, some time ago," continued the Englishman. "I suppose Capt. Porter went in it?"

"Yes. You are quite right."

"And probably more of you will run away, unless I cut away your boats from the davits."

"Perhaps that would be a good plan for you to adopt."

"And I would do it very quickly, if the question rested with me."

"You infernal puppy," shouted the American officer, now thoroughly aroused, "if you have any duty to do, do it; but, if you insult me further, I'll throw you overboard!"

With a few inarticulate sounds, the Englishman stepped into his boat, and was pulled back to the "Saturn," whence soon returned a second boat, bearing an apology for the boarding-officer's rudeness. The boarders

then searched all parts of the ship, mustered her crew on the plea that it contained British deserters, and finally released her, after having inflicted every possible humiliation upon her officers. The "Essex Junior" then proceeded to New York, where she was soon joined by Capt. Porter. The whole country united in doing honor to the officers, overlooking the defeat which closed their cruise, and regarding only the persistent bravery with which they had upheld the cause of the United States in the far-off waters of the Pacific.

Before closing the account of Porter's famous cruise, the story of the ill-fortune which befell Lieut. Gamble should be related. This officer, it will be remembered, was left at Nookaheevah with the prizes "Greenwich," "Seringapatam," and "Hammond." Hardly had the frigate disappeared below the horizon, when the natives began to grow unruly; and Gamble was forced to lead several armed expeditions against them. Then the sailors under his charge began to show signs of mutiny. He found himself almost without means of enforcing his authority, and the disaffection spread daily. The natives, incited by the half-savage Englishman who had been found upon the island, began to make depredations upon the live-stock; while the women would swim out to the ships by night, and purloin bread, aided by their lovers among the crews. To the lieutenant's remonstrances, the natives replied that "Opotee" was not coming back, and they would do as they chose; while the sailors heard his orders with ill-concealed contempt, and made but a pretext of obeying them. In the middle of April three sailors stole a boat from the "Greenwich," and, stocking it well with ammunition and provisions, deserted, and were never again seen. One month later, mutiny broke out in its worst form. Lieut. Gamble and his two midshipmen, being upon the "Seringapatam," were knocked down by the sailors, gagged, bound, and thrust into the hold. The mutineers then went ashore, spiked the guns in the fort, and then, hoisting the British colors over the captured ship, set sail. Lieut. Gamble was badly wounded in the foot by a pistol-shot fired by one of his guards. Notwithstanding his wound, he, with the two lieutenants and two loyal seamen, was turned adrift in an open boat. After long and painful exertions,

they reached the shore, and returned to the bay, where the "Greenwich" still lay at anchor. The mutineers, thirteen of whom were Englishmen who had enlisted in the American service, steered boldly out to sea, and were nevermore heard of. The half-savage Englishman, Wilson, was supposed to be at the bottom of this uprising, and some days later a boat's crew from the "Greenwich" went ashore to capture him. Soon after, Gamble, anxiously watching the shore, saw a struggle upon the beach, the natives rushing down on all sides, the boat overturned in the surf, and two white men swimming towards the ship, making signals of distress. Mr. Clapp, with two men, sprang into a boat, and put off to the aid of the swimmers, leaving Gamble alone on the ship. Two large canoes loaded with savages then left the beach, and swiftly bore down towards the "Essex;" but Gamble, lamed though he was, seized a lighted brand, and hobbled along the deck of the ship, firing her guns with such effect that the savages were driven back, the beach cleared, and Mr. Clapp enabled to save the two struggling men. When the boat returned to the ship, it was learned that Midshipman Feltus and five men had been basely murdered by the savages. There were now left but seven Americans; and of these but two were well, and fit for duty. Setting the "Greenwich" on fire, this little band boarded the "Hammond," and made their way to sea. But between the Sandwich Islands and Honolulu they fell in with the "Cherub," by whom they were captured, and kept prisoners for nine months, when, peace being declared, they were released.

So ended the last incident of the gallant cruise of the "Essex." History has few more adventurous tales to relate.





CHAPTER XII.

CAPTURE OF THE "SURVEYOR."—WORK OF THE GUNBOAT FLOTILLA.—OPERATIONS ON CHESAPEAKE BAY.—COCKBURN'S DEPREDATIONS.—CRUISE OF THE "ARGUS."—HER CAPTURE BY THE "PELICAN."—BATTLE OF THE "ENTERPRISE" AND "BOXER."—END OF THE YEAR 1813 ON THE OCEAN.



WITH the capture of the "Chesapeake" in June, 1813, we abandoned our story of the naval events along the coast of the United States, to follow Capt. Porter and his daring seamen on their long cruise into far-off seas. But while the men of the "Essex" were capturing whalers in the Pacific, chastising insolent savages at Nookaheevah, and fighting a gallant but unsuccessful fight at Valparaiso, other blue-jackets were as gallantly serving their country nearer home. From Portsmouth to Charleston the coast was watched by British ships, and collisions between the enemies were of almost daily occurrence. In many of these actions great bravery was shown on both

sides. Noticeably was this the case in the action between the cutter "Surveyor" and the British frigate "Narcissus," on the night of June 12. The "Surveyor," a little craft manned by a crew of fifteen men, and mounting six twelve-pound carronades, was lying in the York River near Chesapeake Bay. From the masthead of the "Narcissus," lying farther down the bay, the spars of the cutter could be seen above the tree-tops; and an expedition was fitted out for her capture. Fifty men, led by a veteran officer, attacked the little vessel in the darkness, but were met with a most determined resistance. The Americans could not use their carronades, but with their muskets they did much execution in the enemy's ranks. But they were finally overpowered, and the little cutter was towed down under the frigate's guns. The next day Mr. Travis, the American commander, received his sword which he had surrendered, with a letter from the British commander, in which he said, "Your gallant and desperate attempt to defend your vessel against more than double your number, on the night of the 12th inst., excited such admiration on the part of your opponents as I have seldom witnessed, and induced me to return you the sword you had so nobly used, in testimony of mine. . . . In short, I am at a loss which to admire most, the previous arrangement on board the 'Surveyor,' or the determined manner in which her deck was disputed, inch by inch."

During the summer of 1813, the little gunboats, built in accordance with President Jefferson's plan for a coast guard of single-gun vessels, did a great deal of desultory fighting, which resulted in little or nothing. They were not very seaworthy craft, the heavy guns mounted amidships causing them to careen far over in even a sailor's "capfull" of wind. When they went into action, the first shot from the gun set the gunboat rocking so that further fire with any precision of aim was impossible. The larger gunboats carried sail enough to enable them to cruise about the coast, keeping off privateers and checking the marauding expeditions of the British. Many of the gunboats, however, were simply large gallies propelled with oars, and therefore confined in their operations to bays and inland waters. The chief scene of their operations was Chesapeake Bay.

This noble sheet of water had been, since the very opening of the year 1813, under the control of the British, who had gathered there their most powerful vessels under the command of Admiral Cockburn, whose name gained an unenviable notoriety for the atrocities committed by his forces upon the defenceless inhabitants of the shores of Chesapeake Bay. Marauding expeditions were continually sent from the fleet to search the adjacent country for supplies. When this method of securing provisions failed, Cockburn hit upon the plan of bringing his fleet within range of a village, and then commanding the inhabitants to supply his needs, under penalty of the instant bombardment of the town in case of refusal. Sometimes this expedient failed, as when Commodore Beresford, who was blockading the Delaware, called upon the people of Dover to supply him at once with "twenty-five large bullocks and a proportionate quantity of vegetables and hay." But the sturdy inhabitants refused, mustered the militia, dragged some old cannon down to the water-side, and, for lack of cannon-balls of their own, valiantly fired back those thrown by the British, which fitted the American ordnance exactly.

Soon after this occurrence, a large party from Cockburn's fleet landed at Havre de Grace, and, having driven away the few militia, captured and burned the town. Having accomplished this exploit, the marauders continued their way up the bay, and turning up into the Sassafras River ravaged the country on both sides of the little stream. After spreading distress far and wide over the beautiful country that borders Chesapeake Bay, the vandals returned to their ships, boasting that they had despoiled the Americans of at least seventy thousand dollars, and injured them to the amount of ten times that sum.

By June, 1813, the Americans saw that something must be done to check the merciless enemy who had thus revived the cruel vandalism, which had ceased to attend civilized warfare since the middle ages. A fleet of fifteen armed galleys was fitted out to attack the frigate of Cockburn's fleet that lay nearest to Norfolk. Urged forward by long sweeps, the gunboats bore down upon the frigate, which, taken by surprise, made so feeble and irregular a response that the Americans thought they saw

victory within their grasp. The gunboats chose their distance, and opened a well-directed fire upon their huge enemy, that, like a hawk attacked by a crowd of sparrows, soon turned to fly. But at this moment the wind changed, enabling two frigates which were at anchor lower down the bay to come up to the aid of their consort. The American gunboats drew off slowly, firing as they departed.

This attack infused new energy into the British, and they at once began formidable preparations for an attack upon Norfolk. On the 20th of June they moved forward to the assault, — three seventy-four-gun ships, one sixty-four, four frigates, two sloops, and three transports. They were opposed by the American forces stationed on Craney Island, which commands the entrance to Norfolk Harbor. Here the Americans had thrown up earthworks, mounting two twenty-four, one eighteen, and four six pound cannon. To work this battery, one hundred sailors from the “*Constellation*,” together with fifty marines, had been sent ashore. A large body of militia and a few soldiers of the regular army were also in camp upon the island.

The British set the 22d as the date for the attack; and on the morning of that day, fifteen large boats, filled with sailors, marines, and soldiers to the number of seven hundred, put off from the ships, and dashed toward the batteries. At the same time a larger force tried to move forward by land, but were driven back, to wait until their comrades in the boats should have stormed and silenced the American battery. But that battery was not to be silenced. After checking the advance of the British by land, the Americans waited coolly for the column of boats to come within point-blank range. On they came, bounding over the waves, led by the great barge “*Centipede*,” fifty feet long, and crowded with men. The blue-jackets in the shore battery stood silently at their guns. Suddenly there arose a cry, “Now, boys, are you ready?” “All ready,” was the response. “Then fire!” And the great guns hurled their loads of lead and iron into the advancing boats. The volley was a fearful one; but the British still came on doggedly, until the fire of the battery became too terrible to be endured. “The American sailors handled the great

guns like rifles," said one of the British officers, speaking of the battle. Before this terrific fire, the advancing column was thrown into confusion. The boats, drifting upon each other, so crowded together that the oarsmen could not make any headway. A huge round shot struck the "Centipede," passing through her diagonally, leaving death and wounds in its track. The shattered craft sunk, and was soon followed by four others. The order for retreat was given; and, leaving their dead and some wounded in the shattered barges that lay in the shallow water, the British fled to their ships. Midshipman Tatnall, who, many years later, served in the Confederate navy, waded out with several sailors, and, seizing the "Centipede," drew her ashore. He found several wounded men in her,—one a Frenchman, with both legs shot away. A small terrier dog lay whimpering in the bow. His master had brought him along for a run on shore, never once thinking of the possibility of the flower of the British navy being beaten back by the Americans.

So disastrous a defeat enraged the British, who proceeded to wreak their vengeance upon the little town of Hampton, which they sacked and burned, committing acts of shameful violence, more in accordance with the character of savages than that of civilized white men. The story of the sack of Hampton forms no part of the naval annals of the war, and in its details is too revolting to deserve a place here. It is a narrative of atrocious cruelty not to be paralleled in the history of warfare in the nineteenth century.

Leaving behind him the smoking ruins of Hampton, Cockburn with his fleet dropped down the bay, and, turning southward, cruised along the coast of the Carolinas. Anchoring off Ocracoke Inlet, the British sent a fleet of armed barges into Pamlico Sound to ravage the adjoining coast. Two privateers were found lying at anchor in the sound,—the "Anaconda" of New York, and the "Atlas" of Philadelphia. The British forces, eight hundred in number, dashed forward to capture the two vessels. The "Atlas" fell an easy prey; but the thirteen men of the "Anaconda" fought stoutly until all hope was gone, then, turning their cannon down upon the decks of their own vessel, blew great holes in her

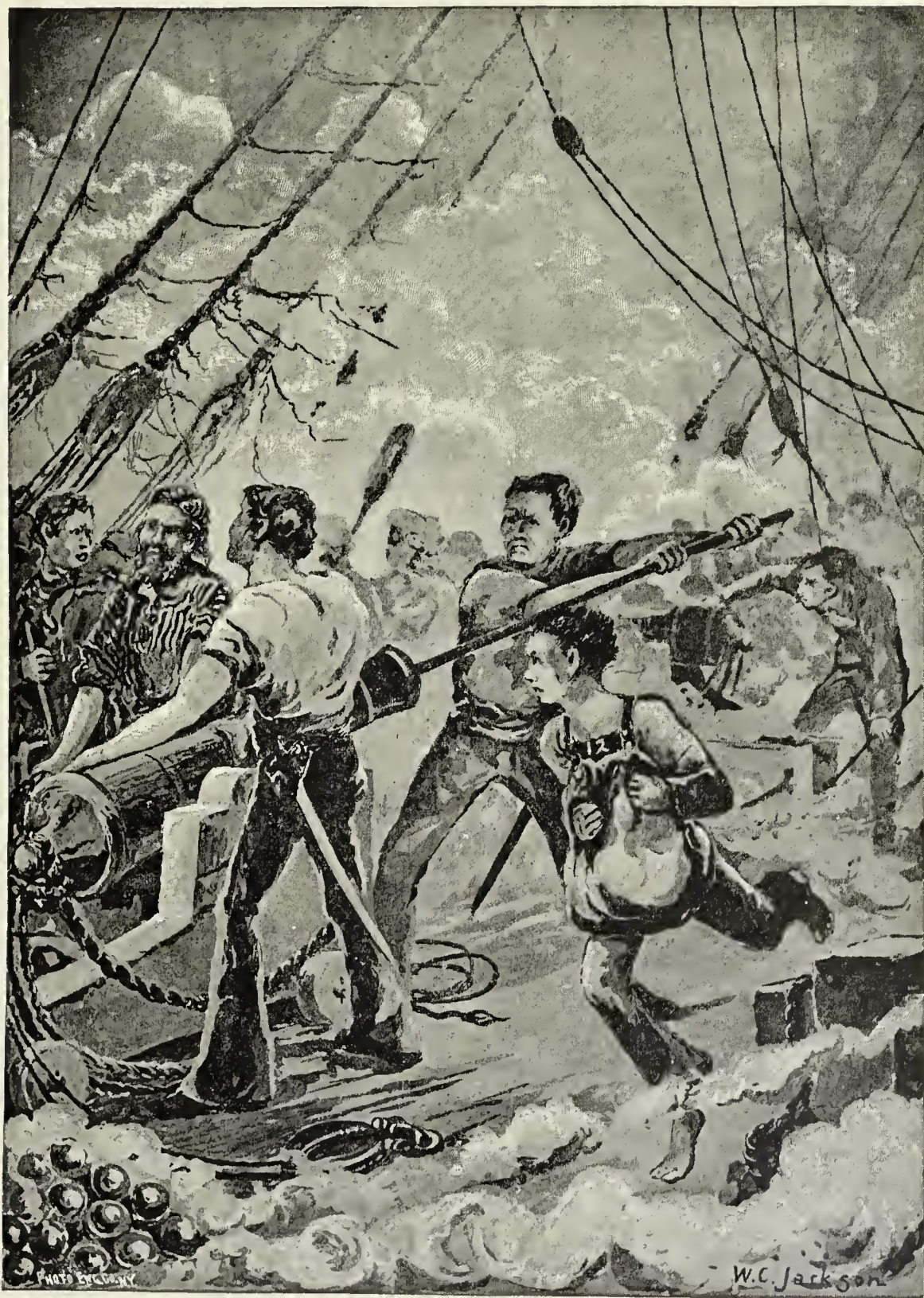
bottom, and escaped to the shore. After this skirmish, the British landed, and marched rapidly to Newbern; but, finding that place well defended by militia, made their way back to the coast, desolating the country through which they passed, and seizing cattle and slaves. The latter they are said to have sent to the West Indies and sold. From Pamlico Sound Cockburn went to Cumberland Island, where he established his winter quarters, and whence he continued to send out marauding expeditions during the rest of the year.

Very different was the character of Sir Thomas Hardy, who commanded the British blockading fleet off the New England coast. A brave and able officer, with the nature and training of a gentleman, he was as much admired by his enemies for his nobility, as Cockburn was hated for his cruelty. It is more than possible, however, that the difference between the methods of enforcement of the blockade on the New England coast and on the Southern seaboard was due to definite orders from the British admiralty: for the Southern States had entered into the war heart and soul; while New England gave to the American forces only a faint-hearted support, and cried eagerly for peace at any cost. So strong was this feeling, that resolutions of honor to the brave Capt. Lawrence were defeated in the Massachusetts Legislature, on the ground that they would encourage others to embark in the needless war in which Lawrence lost his life. Whatever may have been the cause, however, the fact remains, that Hardy's conduct while on the blockade won for him the respect and admiration of the very people against whom his forces were arrayed.

On June 18 the British blockaders off New York Harbor allowed a little vessel to escape to sea, that, before she could be captured, roamed at will within sight of the chalk cliffs of England, and inflicted immense damage upon the commerce of her enemy. This craft was the little ten-gun brig "Argus," which left New York bound for France. She carried as passenger Mr. Crawford of Georgia, who had lately been appointed United States minister to France. After safely discharging her passenger at L'Orient, the "Argus" turned into the chops of the English

Channel, and cruised about, burning and capturing many of the enemy's ships. She was in the very highway of British commerce; and her crew had little rest day or night, so plentiful were the ships that fell in their way. It was hard for the jackies to apply the torch to so many stanch vessels, that would enrich the whole crew with prize-money could they but be sent into an American port. But the little cruiser was thousands of miles from any American port, and no course was open to her save to give every prize to the flames. After cruising for a time in the English Channel, Lieut. Allen, who commanded the "Argus," took his vessel around Land's End, and into St. George's Channel and the Irish Sea. For thirty days he continued his daring operations in the very waters into which Paul Jones had carried the American flag nearly thirty-five years earlier. British merchants and shipping owners in London read with horror of the destruction wrought by this one vessel. Hardly a paper appeared without an account of some new damage done by the "Argus." Vessels were kept in port to rot at their docks, rather than fall a prey to the terrible Yankee. Rates of insurance went up to ruinous prices, and many companies refused to take any risks whatever so long as the "Argus" remained afloat. But the hue and cry was out after the little vessel; and many a stout British frigate was beating up and down in St. George's Channel, and the chops of the English Channel, in the hopes of falling in with the audacious Yankee, who had presumed to bring home to Englishmen the horrors of war.

It fell to the lot of the brig-sloop "Pelican" to rid the British waters of the "Argus." On the night of the thirteenth of August, the American vessel had fallen in with a British vessel from Oporto, and after a short chase had captured her. The usual result followed. The prisoners with their personal property were taken out of the prize, and the vessel was set afire. But, before the torch was applied, the American sailors had discovered that their prize was laden with wine; and their resolution was not equal to the task of firing the prize without testing the quality of the cargo. Besides treating themselves to rather deep potations, the



BLUE JACKETS AT THE GUNS.

boarding-crew contrived to smuggle a quantity of the wine into the fore-castle of the "Argus." The prize was then fired, and the "Argus" moved away under easy sail. But the light of the blazing ship attracted the attention of the lookout on the "Pelican," and that vessel came down under full sail to discover the cause.

Day was just breaking, and by the gray morning light the British saw an American cruiser making away from the burning hulk of her last prize. The "Pelican" followed in hot pursuit, and was allowed to come alongside, although the fleet American could easily have left her far astern. But Capt. Allen was ready for the conflict; confident of his ship and of his crew, of whose half-intoxicated condition he knew nothing, he felt sure that the coming battle would only add more laurels to the many already won by the "Argus." He had often declared that the "Argus" should never run from any two-master; and now, that the gage of battle was offered, he promptly accepted.

At six o'clock in the morning, the "Pelican" came alongside, and opened the conflict with a broadside from her thirty-two pound caronades. The "Argus" replied with spirit, and a sharp cannonade began. Four minutes after the battle opened, Capt. Allen was struck by a round shot that cut off his left leg near the thigh. His officers rushed to his side, and strove to bear him to his cabin; but he resisted, saying he would stay on deck and fight his ship as long as any life was left him. With his back to a mast, he gave his orders and cheered on his men for a few minutes longer; then, fainting from the terrible gush of blood from his wound, was carried below. To lose their captain so early in the action, was enough to discourage the crew of the "Argus." Yet the officers left on duty were brave and skilful. Twice the vessel was swung into a raking position, but the gunners failed to seize the advantage. "They seemed to be nodding over their guns," said one of the officers afterward. The enemy, however, showed no signs of nodding. His fire was rapid and well directed, and his vessel manœuvred in a way that showed a practised seaman in command. At last he secured a position under the stern of the "Argus," and lay there, pouring in

destructive broadsides, until the Americans struck their flag, — just forty-seven minutes after the opening of the action. The loss on the "Argus" amounted to six killed and seventeen wounded.

No action of the war was so discreditable to the Americans as this. In the loss of the "Chesapeake" and in the loss of the "Essex," there were certain features of the action that redounded greatly to the honor of the defeated party. But in the action between the "Argus" and the "Pelican," the Americans were simply outfought. The vessels were practically equal in size and armament, though the "Pelican" carried a little the heavier metal. It is also stated that the powder used by the "Argus" was bad. It had been taken from one of the prizes, and afterwards proved to be condemned powder of the British Government. In proof of the poor quality of this powder, one of the American officers states that many shot striking the side of the "Pelican" were seen to fall back into the water; while others penetrated the vessel's skin, but did no further damage. All this, however, does not alter the fact that the "Argus" was fairly beaten in a fair fight.

While the British thus snapped up an American man-of-war cruising at their harbors' mouths, the Americans were equally fortunate in capturing a British brig of fourteen guns off the coast of Maine. The captor was the United States brig "Enterprise," a lucky little vessel belonging to a very unlucky class; for her sister brigs all fell a prey to the enemy. The "Nautilus," it will be remembered, was captured early in the war. The "Vixen" fell into the hands of Sir James Yeo, who was cruising in the West Indies, in the frigate "Southampton;" but this gallant officer reaped but little benefit from his prize, for frigate and brig alike were soon after wrecked on one of the Bahama Islands. The "Siren," late in the war, was captured by the seventy-four-gun ship "Medway," and the loss of the "Argus" has just been chronicled. Of all these brigs, the "Argus" alone was able to fire a gun in her own defence, before being captured; the rest were all forced to yield quietly to immensely superior force.

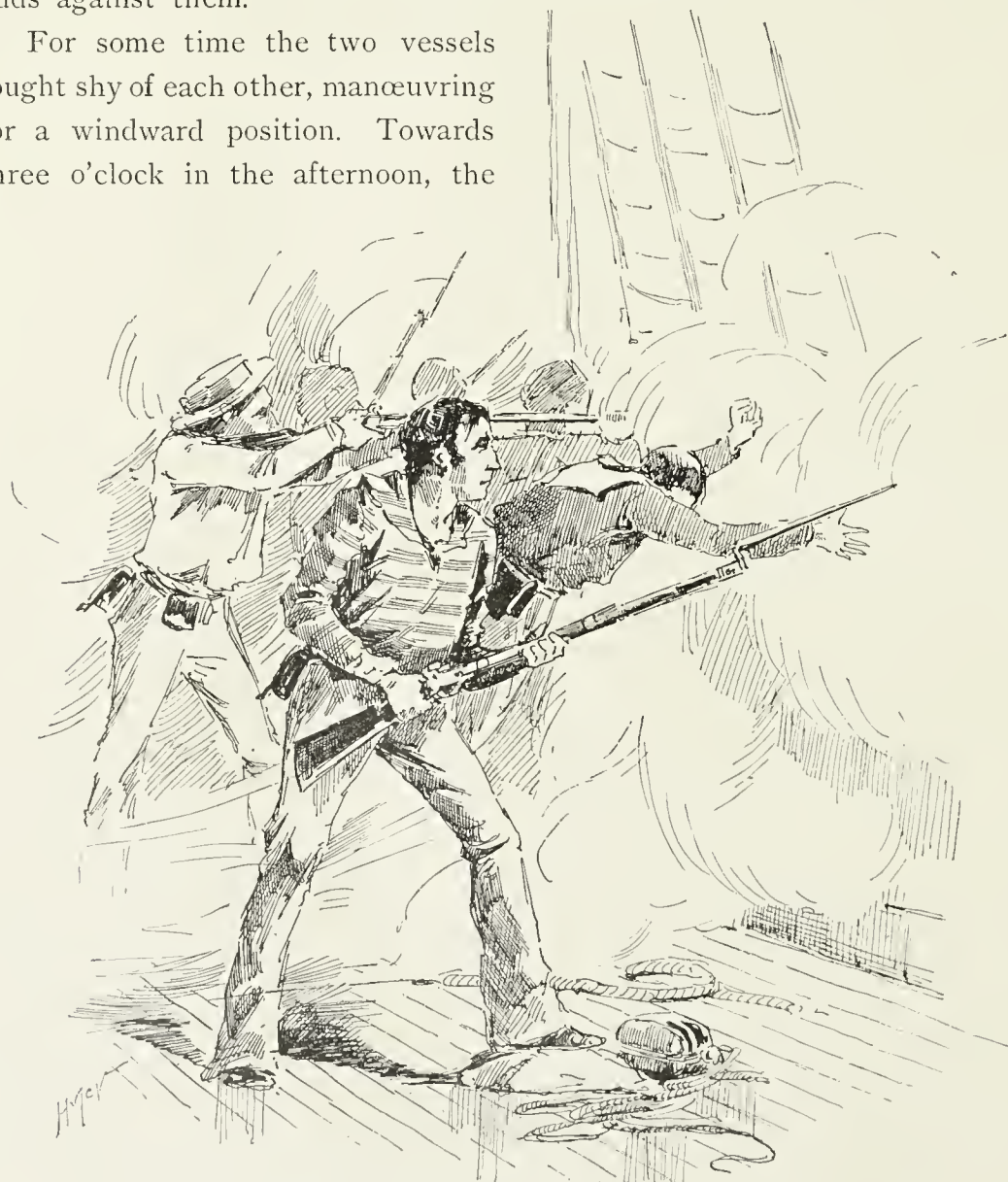
In the war with Tripoli, the "Enterprise" won the reputation of being

a "lucky" craft; and her daring adventures and thrilling escapes during the short naval war with France added to her prestige among sailors. When the war with England broke out, the little brig was put in commission as soon as possible, and assigned to duty along the coast of Maine. She did good service in keeping off privateers and marauding expeditions from Nova Scotia. In the early part of September, 1813, she was cruising near Penguin Point, when she sighted a brig in shore that had the appearance of a hostile war-vessel. The stranger soon settled all doubts as to her character by firing several guns, seemingly for the purpose of recalling her boats from the shore. Then, setting sail with the rapidity of a man-of-war, she bore down upon the American vessel. The "Enterprise," instead of waiting for the enemy, turned out to sea, under easy sail; and her crew were set to work bringing aft a long gun, and mounting it in the cabin, where one of the stern windows had been chopped away to make a port. This action rather alarmed the sailors, who feared that their commander, Lieut. Burrows, whose character was unknown to them, intended to avoid the enemy, and was rigging the long gun for a stern-chaser. An impromptu meeting was held upon the fore-castle; and, after much whispered consultation, the people appointed a committee to go aft and tell the commander that the lads were burning to engage the enemy, and were confident of whipping her. The committee started bravely to discharge their commission; but their courage failed them before so mighty a potentate as the commander, and they whispered their message to the first lieutenant, who laughed, and sent word forward that Mr. Burrows only wanted to get sea-room, and would soon give the jackies all the fighting they desired.

The Americans now had leisure to examine, through their marine-glasses, the vessel which was so boldly following them to the place of battle. She was a man-of-war brig, flying the British ensign from both mastheads and at the peak. Her armament consisted of twelve eighteen-pound carronades and two long sixes, as against the fourteen eighteen-pound carronades and two long nines of the "Enterprise." The Englishman carried a crew of sixty-six men, while the quarter-rolls of the American

showed a total of one hundred and two. But in the battle which followed the British fought with such desperate bravery as to almost overcome the odds against them.

For some time the two vessels fought shy of each other, manœuvring for a windward position. Towards three o'clock in the afternoon, the



THE FIGHT WITH THE "BOXER."

Americans gained this advantage, and at once shortened sail, and edged down toward the enemy. As the ships drew near, a sailor was seen to climb

into the rigging of the Englishman, and nail the colors to the mast, giving the lads of the "Enterprise" a hint as to the character of the reception they might expect. As the vessels came within range, both crews cheered lustily, and continued cheering until within pistol-shot, when the two broadsides were let fly at almost exactly the same moment. With the first fire, both commanders fell. Capt. Blyth of the English vessel was almost cut in two by a round shot as he stood on his quarter-deck. He died instantly. Lieut. Burrows was struck by a canister-shot, which inflicted a mortal wound. He refused to be carried below, and was tenderly laid upon the deck, where he remained during the remainder of the battle, cheering on his men, and crying out that the colors of the "Enterprise" should never be struck. The conflict was sharp, but short. For ten minutes only the answering broadsides rung out; then the colors of the British ship were hauled down. She proved to be the sloop-of-war "Boxer," and had suffered severely from the broadsides of the "Enterprise." Several shots had taken effect in her hull, her fore-mast was almost shot away, and several guns were dismounted. Three men beside her captain were killed, and seventeen wounded. But she had not suffered these injuries without inflicting some in return. The "Enterprise" was much cut up aloft. Her fore-mast and main-mast had each been pierced by an eighteen-pound ball. Her captain lay upon the deck, gasping in the last agonies of death, but stoutly protesting that he would not be carried below until he received the sword of the commander of the "Boxer." At last this was brought him; and grasping it he cried, "Now I am satisfied. I die contented."

The two shattered brigs were taken into Portland, where the bodies of the two slain commanders were buried with all the honors of war. The "Enterprise" was repaired, and made one more cruise before the close of the war; but the "Boxer" was found to be forever ruined for a vessel of war, and she was sold into the merchant-service. The fact that she was so greatly injured in so short a time led a London paper, in speaking of the battle, to say, "The fact seems to be but too clearly established, that the Americans have some superior mode of firing; and we cannot

be too anxiously employed in discovering to what circumstances that superiority is owing."

This battle practically closed the year's naval events upon the ocean.

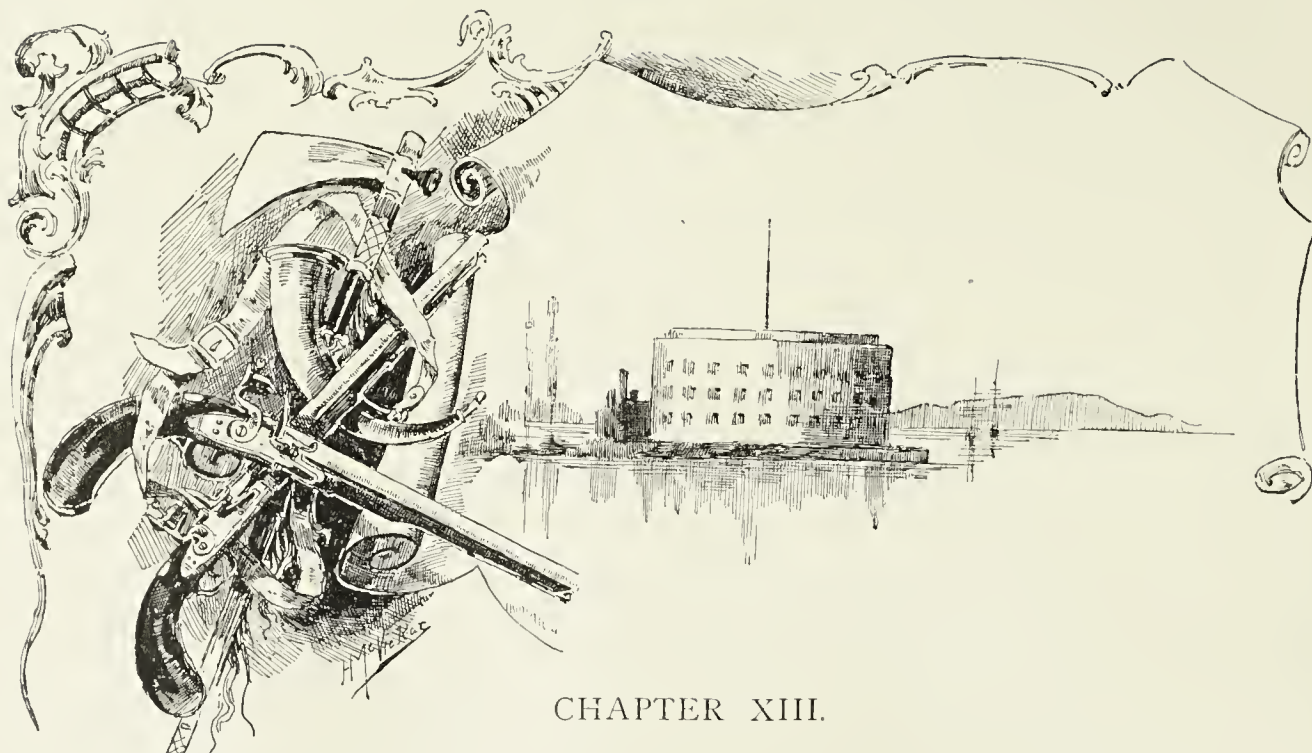


THE SURRENDER OF THE "BOXER."

The British privateer "Dart" was captured near Newport by some volunteers from the gunboats stationed at that point. But, with this exception, nothing noteworthy in naval circles occurred during the remainder of the year. Looking back over the annals of the naval operations of 1813, it

is clear that the Americans were the chief sufferers. They had the victories over the "Peacock," "Boxer," and "Highflyer" to boast of; but they had lost the "Chesapeake," "Argus," and "Viper." But, more than this, they had suffered their coast to be so sealed up by British blockaders that many of their best vessels were left to lie idle at their docks. The blockade, too, was growing stricter daily, and the outlook for the future seemed gloomy; yet, as it turned out, in 1814 the Americans regained the ground they had lost the year before.





CHAPTER XIII.

ON THE LAKES.—CLOSE OF HOSTILITIES ON LAKES ERIE AND HURON.—DESULTORY WARFARE ON LAKE ONTARIO IN 1813.—HOSTILITIES ON ONTARIO IN 1814.—THE BATTLE OF LAKE CHAMPLAIN.—END OF THE WAR UPON THE LAKES.

IN considering the naval operations on the Great Lakes, it must be kept in mind, that winter, which checked but little naval activity on the ocean, locked the great fresh-water seas in an impenetrable barrier of ice, and effectually stopped all further hostilities between the hostile forces afloat. The victory gained by Commodore Perry on Lake Erie in September, 1813, gave the Americans complete command of that lake; and the frozen season soon coming on, prevented any attempts on the part of the enemy to contest the American supremacy. But, indeed, the British showed little ability, throughout the subsequent course of the war, to snatch from the Americans the fruits of the victory at Put-in-Bay. They embarked upon no more offensive expeditions; and the only notable naval contest between the two belligerents during the remainder of the war occurred Aug. 12, 1814, when a party of seventy-five British seamen and marines attempted to cut out three American schooners that lay at the foot of the lake near Fort Erie.

The British forces were at Queenstown, on the Niagara River; but by dint of carrying their boats twenty miles through the woods, then poling down a narrow and shallow stream, with a second portage of eight miles, the adventurers managed to reach Lake Erie. Embarking here, they



ON THE WAY TO LAKE ERIE.

pulled down to the schooners. To the hail of the lookout, they responded, "Provision boats." And, as no British were thought to be on Lake Erie, the response satisfied the officer of the watch. He quickly discovered his mistake, however, when he saw his cable cut, and a party of armed men scrambling over his bulwarks. This first prize, the "Somers," was quickly in the hands of the British, and was soon joined in captivity by

the "Ohio," whose people fought bravely but unavailingly against the unexpected foe. While the fighting was going on aboard the vessels, they were drifting down the stream; and, by the time the British victory was complete, both vessels were beyond the range of Fort Erie's guns, and safe from recapture. This successful enterprise certainly deserves a place as the boldest and best executed cutting-out expedition of the war.

Long before this occurrence, Capt. Arthur Singleton, who had succeeded to Perry's command, despairing of any active service on Lake Erie, had taken his squadron of five vessels into Lake Huron, where the British still held the supremacy. His objective point was the Island of Michilimackinac (Mackinaw), which had been captured by the enemy early in the war. On his way, he stopped and burned the British fort and barracks of St. Joseph. At Mackinaw he was repulsed, with the loss of seventy men; after which he returned to Lake Erie, leaving two vessels, the "Scorpion" and "Tigress," to blockade the Nattagawassa River. The presence of these vessels irritated the British, and they at once set about preparations for their capture. On the night of the 3d of September the "Tigress" was captured after a sharp struggle, which, as the British commanding officer said, "did credit to her officers, who were all severely wounded." At the time of the attack, the "Scorpion" was several miles away, and knew nothing of the misfortune of her consort. Knowing this, the British sent their prisoners ashore, and, hoisting the American flag over the captured vessel, waited patiently for their game to come to them. They were not disappointed in their expectations. On the 5th the "Scorpion" came up, and anchored, unsuspectingly, within two miles of her consort. At early dawn the next morning the "Tigress" weighed anchor; and, with the stars and stripes still flying, dropped down alongside the unsuspecting schooner, poured in a sudden volley, and, instantly boarding, carried the vessel without meeting any resistance.

With these two skirmishes, the war upon Lake Erie and Lake Huron was ended. But on Lake Ontario the naval events, though in no case comparable with Perry's famous victory, were numerous and noteworthy.

In our previous discussion of the progress of the war upon Lake Ontario, we left Commodore Chauncey in winter quarter at Sackett's Harbor, building new ships, and making vigorous efforts to secure sailors to man them. His energy met with its reward; for, when the melting ice left the lake open for navigation in the spring of 1813, the American fleet was ready for active service, while the best vessels belonging to the British were still in the hands of the carpenters and riggers. The first service performed by the American fleet was aiding Gen. Pike in his attack upon York, where the Americans burned an almost completed twenty-four-gun ship, and captured the ten-gun brig "Gloucester." The land forces who took part in this action were terribly injured by the explosion of the powder-magazine, to which the British had applied a slow-match when they found they could no longer hold their position. This battle was fought April 27, 1813. One month later, the naval forces co-operated with the soldiery in driving the British from Fort George, on the Canada side of the Niagara River, near Lake Ontario. Perry came from Lake Erie to take part in this action, and led a landing party under the fire of the British artillery with that dashing courage which he showed later at the battle of Put-in-Bay. The work of the sailors in this action was cool and effective. Their fire covered the advance of the troops, and silenced more than one of the enemy's guns. "The American ships," writes a British historian, "with their heavy discharges of round and grape, too well succeeded in thinning the British ranks."

But by this time the British fleet was ready for sea, and left Kingston on the 27th of May; while Chauncey was still at the extreme western end of the lake. The enemy determined to make an immediate assault upon Sackett's Harbor, and there destroy the corvette "Gen. Pike," which, if completed, would give Chauncey supremacy upon the lake. Accordingly the fleet under Sir James Lucas Yeo, with a large body of troops under Sir George Prescott, appeared before the harbor on the 29th. Although the forces which rallied to the defence of the village were chiefly raw militia, the British attack was conducted with so little spirit that the defenders won the day; and the enemy retreated, leaving most

of his wounded to fall into the hands of the Americans. Yeo then returned to Kingston; and the American fleet came up the lake, and put into Sackett's Harbor, there to remain until the completion of the "Pike" should give Chauncey control of the lake. While the Americans thus remained in port, the British squadron made brief incursions into the lake, capturing a few schooners and breaking up one or two encampments of the land forces of the United States.

Not until the 21st of July did the Americans leave their anchorage. On that day, with the formidable corvette "Pike" at the head of the line, Chauncey left Sackett's Harbor, and went up to Niagara. Some days later, Yeo took his squadron to sea; and on the 7th of August the two hostile fleets came in sight of one another for the first time. Then followed a season of manœuvring, — of challenging and counter-challenging, of offering battle and of avoiding it, — terminating in so inconclusive an engagement that one is forced to believe that neither commander dared to enter the battle for which both had been so long preparing. The American squadron consisted largely of schooners armed with long guns. In smooth weather these craft were valuable adjuncts to the larger vessels, while in rough weather they were useless. Yeo's squadron was mostly square-rigged, and was therefore equally serviceable in all kinds of weather. It seems likely, therefore, that the Americans strove to bring on the conflict in smooth weather; while the British were determined to wait until a heavy sea should lessen the force of their foes. In this dilemma several days passed away.

On the night of the 7th of August the wind came up to blow, and the rising waves soon demonstrated the uselessness of schooners for purposes of war. At early dawn a fierce gust of wind caused the schooners "Hamilton" and "Scourge" to careen far to leeward. Their heavy guns broke loose; then, crashing down to the submerged beams of the schooners, pulled them still farther over; and, the water rushing in at their hatches, they foundered, carrying with them to the bottom all their officers, and all but sixteen of the men. This loss reduced Chauncey's force to more of an equality with that of the British; yet for two days longer the

manœuvring continued, without a shot being fired. On the night of the 10th the two squadrons formed in order of battle, and rapidly approached each other. At eleven o'clock a cannonade was begun by both parties, and continued for about an hour; though the shot did little material damage on either side. At midnight the British, by a quick movement, cut out and captured two American schooners, and sailed away, without suffering any damage.

A month then intervened before the next hostile meeting. In his despatches to his superior authorities, each commander stoutly affirms that he spent the time in chasing the enemy, who refused to give him battle. Whether it was the British or the Americans that avoided the battle, it is impossible to decide; but it seems reasonable to believe, that, had either party been really determined upon bringing matters to an issue, the other could have been forced into giving battle.

On the 11th of September, the enemies met near the mouth of the Genesee River, and exchanged broadsides. A few of the British vessels were hulled, and, without more ado, hauled off into the shallow waters of Ambert Bay, whither the Americans could not follow them. Then ensued another long period of peace, broken at last by a naval action in York Bay, on the 28th, in which the British were worsted and obliged to fly, though none of their ships were destroyed or captured. On Oct. 2, Chauncey accomplished a really important work, by capturing five British transports, with two hundred and sixty-four men, seven naval and ten army officers. With this achievement, the active work of the Ontario squadron ended for the year, as Chauncey remained blockading Yeo at Kingston, until the approach of winter rendered that precaution no longer necessary.

The navigable season of 1814 opened with the British first upon the lake. The long winter had been employed by the belligerents in adding to their fleets; a work completed first by Yeo, who put out upon the lake on the 3d of May, with eight square-rigged vessels, of which two were new frigates. The Americans had given up their unseaworthy schooners, and had a fleet of eight square-rigged vessels nearly ready, but still lacking

the cordage and guns for the three new craft. Yeo thus had the lake to himself for a time, and began a vigorous campaign by an attack upon Oswego, aided by a large body of British troops. Succeeding in this enterprise, he set sail for Sackett's Harbor, and, taking up his position just outside the bar, disposed his vessels for a long and strict blockade. This action was particularly troublesome to the Americans at that time; for their new frigates were just ready for their guns and cables, which could not be brought overland, and the arrival of which by water was seemingly prevented by the blockade. It was in this emergency that the plan, already described, for transporting the great cable for the "Niagara" overland, on the backs of men, was decided upon. Yeo remained on guard at the mouth of the harbor until the 6th of June, then raised the blockade, and disappeared down the lake. For six weeks the Americans continued working on their fleet, to get the ships ready for service. During this time the British gunboat "Black Snake" was brought into the harbor, a prize to Lieut. Gregory, who had captured it by a sudden assault, with a score of sailors at his back. On the 1st of July, the same officer made a sudden descent upon Presque Isle, where he found a British vessel pierced for fourteen guns on the stocks, ready for launching. The raiders hastily set fire to the ship, and retreated before the enemy could get his forces together.

It was July 31 before Chauncey set sail from Sackett's Harbor. He now had under his command a squadron of eight vessels, two of which were frigates, two ship sloops-of-war, and eight brig-sloops of no mean power. Yeo had, to oppose this force, a fleet of no less respectable proportions. Yet, for the remainder of the year, these two squadrons cruised about the lake, or blockaded each other in turn, without once coming to battle. As transports, the vessels were of some service to their respective governments; but, so far as any actual naval operations were concerned, they might as well never have been built. The war closed, leaving the two cautious commanders still waiting for a satisfactory occasion for giving battle.

Such was the course of the naval war upon the Great Lakes; but the

thunder of hostile cannon and the cheers of sailors were heard upon yet another sheet of fresh water, before the quarrel between England and the United States was settled. In the north-east corner of New York State, and slightly overlapping the Canada line, lies Lake Champlain, — a picturesque sheet of water, narrow, and dotted with wooded islands. From the northern end of the lake flows the Richelieu River, which follows a straight course through Canada to the St. Lawrence, into which it empties. The long, navigable water-way thus open from Canada to the very heart of New York was to the British a most tempting path for an invading expedition. By the shore of the lake a road wound along; thus smoothing the way for a land force, whose advance might be protected by the fire of the naval force that should proceed up the lake. Naturally, so admirable an international highway early attracted the attention of the military authorities of both belligerents; and, while the British pressed forward their preparations for an invading expedition, the Americans hastened to make such arrangements as should give them control of the lake. Her European wars, however, made so great a demand for soldiers upon Great Britain, that not until 1814 could she send to America a sufficient force to undertake the invasion of the United States from the north. In the spring of that year, a force of from ten thousand to fifteen thousand troops, including several thousand veterans who had served under Wellington, were massed at Montreal; and in May a move was made by the British to get control of the lake, before sending their invading forces into New York. The British naval force already in the Richelieu River, and available for service, consisted of a brig, two sloops, and twelve or fourteen gunboats. The American flotilla included a large corvette, a schooner, a small sloop, and ten gunboats, or galleys, propelled with oars. Seeing that the British were preparing for active hostilities, the Americans began to build, with all possible speed, a large brig; a move which the enemy promptly met by pushing forward with equal energy the construction of a frigate. While the new vessels were on the stocks, an irregular warfare was carried on by those already in commission. At the opening of the season, the American vessels lay in Otter Creek; and,

just as they were ready to leave port, the enemy appeared off the mouth of the creek with a force consisting of the brig "Linnet" and eight or ten galleys. The object of the British was to so obstruct the mouth of the creek that the Americans should be unable to come out. With this end in view, they had brought two sloops laden with stones, which they intended to sink in the narrow channel. But, luckily, the Americans had thrown up earthworks at the mouth of the river; and a party of sailors so worked the guns, that, after much manœuvring, the British were forced to retire without effecting their purpose.

About the middle of August, the Americans launched their new brig, the "Eagle;" and the little squadron put out at once into the lake, under command of Capt. Thomas Macdonough. Eight days later, the British got their new ship, the "Confiance," into the water. She possessed one feature new to American naval architecture,—a furnace in which to heat cannon-balls.

By this time (September, 1814), the invading column of British veterans, eleven thousand strong, had begun its march into New York along the west shore of the lake. Two thousand Americans only could be gathered to dispute their progress; and these, under the command of Brigadier-Gen. Macomb, were gathered at Plattsburg. To this point, accordingly, Macdonough took his fleet, and awaited the coming of the enemy; knowing that if he could beat back the fleet of the British, their land forces, however powerful, would be forced to cease their advance. The fleet that he commanded consisted of the flag-ship "Saratoga," carrying eight long twenty-four-pounders, six forty-two-pound and twelve thirty-two-pound carronades; the brig "Eagle," carrying eight long eighteens, and twelve thirty-two-pound carronades; schooner "Ticonderoga," with eight long twelve-pounders, four long eighteen-pounders, and five thirty-two-pound carronades; sloop "Preble," with seven long nines; and ten galleys. The commander who ruled over this fleet was a man still in his twenty-ninth year. The successful battles of the War of 1812 were fought by young officers, and the battle of Lake Champlain was no exception to the rule.

The British force which came into battle with Macdonough's fleet was slightly superior. It was headed by the flag-ship "Confiance," a frigate of the class of the United States ship "Constitution," carrying thirty long twenty-fours, a long twenty-four-pounder on a pivot, and six thirty-two or forty-two pound carronades. The other vessels were the "Linnet," a brig mounting sixteen long twelves; and the "Chubb" and "Finch" (captured from the Americans under the names of "Growler" and "Eagle"), — sloops carrying respectively ten eighteen-pound carronades and one long six; and six eighteen-pound carronades, four long sixes, and one short eighteen. To these were added twelve gunboats, with varied armaments, but each slightly heavier than the American craft of the same class.

The 11th of September had been chosen by the British for the combined land and water attack upon Plattsburg. With the movements of the land forces, this narrative will not deal. The brunt of the conflict fell upon the naval forces, and it was the success of the Americans upon the water that turned the faces of the British invaders toward Canada.

The village of Plattsburg stands upon the shore of a broad bay which communicates with Lake Champlain by an opening a mile and a half wide, bounded upon the north by Cumberland Head, and on the south by Crab Island. In this bay, about two miles from the western shore, Macdonough's fleet lay anchored in double line, stretching north and south. The four large vessels were in the front rank, prepared to meet the brunt of the conflict; while the galleys formed a second line in the rear. The morning of the day of battle dawned clear, with a brisk north-east wind blowing. The British were stirring early, and at daybreak weighed anchor and came down the lake. Across the low-lying isthmus that connected Cumberland Head with the mainland, the Americans could see their adversaries' top-masts as they came down to do battle. At this sight, Macdonough called his officers about him, and, kneeling upon the quarter-deck, besought Divine aid in the conflict so soon to come. When the little group rose from their knees, the leading ship of the enemy was seen swinging round Cumberland Head; and the men went to their quarters to await the fiery trial that all knew was impending.

The position of the American squadron was such that the British were forced to attack "bows on," thus exposing themselves to a raking fire. By means of springs on their cables, the Americans were enabled to keep their broadsides to the enemy, and thus improve, to the fullest, the advantage gained by their position. The British came on gallantly, and were greeted by four shots from the long eighteens of the "Eagle," that had no effect. But, at the sound of the cannon, a young game-cock that was running at large on the "Saratoga" flew upon a gun, flapped his wings, and crowed thrice, with so lusty a note that he was heard far over the waters. The American seamen, thus roused from the painful reverie into which the bravest fall before going into action, cheered lustily, and went into the fight, encouraged as only sailors could be by the favorable omen.

Soon after the defiant game-cock had thus cast down the gage of battle, Macdonough sighted and fired the first shot from one of the long twenty-four pounders of the "Saratoga." The heavy ball crashed into the bow of the "Confiance," and cut its way aft, killing and wounding several men, and demolishing the wheel. Nothing daunted, the British flag-ship came on grandly, making no reply, and seeking only to cast anchor alongside the "Saratoga," and fight it out yard-arm to yard-arm. But the fire of the Americans was such that she could not choose her distance; but after having been badly cut up, with both her port anchors shot away, was forced to anchor at a distance of a quarter of a mile. But her anchor had hardly touched bottom, when she suddenly flashed out a sheet of flames, as her rapid broadsides rung out and her red-hot shot sped over the water toward the American flag-ship. Her first broadside killed or wounded forty of the Americans; while many more were knocked down by the shock, but sustained no further injury. So great was the carnage, that the hatches were opened, and the dead bodies passed below, that the men might have room to work the guns. Among the slain was Mr. Gamble, the first lieutenant, who was on his knees sighting a gun, when a shot entered the port, split the quoin, drove a great piece of metal against his breast, and stretched him dead upon the

deck without breaking his skin. By a singular coincidence, fifteen minutes later a shot from one of the "Saratoga's" guns struck the muzzle of a twenty-four on the "Confiance," and, dismounting it, hurled it against Capt. Downie's groin, killing him instantly without breaking the skin; a black mark about the size of a small plate was the sole visible injury.

In the mean time, the smaller vessels had become engaged, and were fighting with no less courage than the flag-ships. The "Chubb" had early been disabled by a broadside from the "Eagle," and drifted helplessly under the guns of the "Saratoga." After receiving a shot from that vessel, she struck, and was taken possession of by Midshipman Platt, who put off from the flag-ship in an open boat, boarded the prize, and took her into Plattsburg Bay, near the mouth of the Saranac. More than half her people were killed or wounded during the short time she was in the battle. The "Linnet," in the mean time, had engaged the "Eagle," and poured in her broadsides with such effect that the springs on the cables of the American were cut away, and she could no longer bring her broadsides to bear. Her captain therefore cut his cables, and soon gained a position from which he could bring his guns to bear upon the "Confiance." The "Linnet" thereupon dashed in among the American gunboats, and, driving them off, commenced a raking fire upon the "Saratoga." The "Finch," meanwhile, had ranged gallantly up alongside the "Ticonderoga," but was sent out of the fight by two broadsides from the American. She drifted helplessly before the wind, and soon grounded near Crab Island. On the island was a hospital, and an abandoned battery mounting one six-pound gun. Some of the convalescent patients, seeing the enemy's vessel within range, opened fire upon her from the battery, and soon forced her to haul down her flag. Nearly half her crew were killed or wounded. Almost at the same moment, the United States sloop "Preble" was forced out of the fight by the British gunboats, that pressed so fiercely upon her that she cut her cables and drifted inshore.

The "Ticonderoga" fought a gallant fight throughout. After ridding

herself of the "Finch," she had a number of the British gunboats to contend with; and they pressed forward to the attack with a gallantry that showed them to be conscious of the fact, that, if this vessel could be carried, the American line would be turned, and the day won by the English. But the American schooner fought stubbornly. Her gallant



HIRAM PAULDING FIRES THE GUNS.

commander, Lieut. Cassin, walked up and down the taffrail, heedless of the grape and musket-balls that whistled past his head, pointing out to the gunners the spot whereon to train the guns, and directing them to load with canister and bags of bullets when the enemy came too near. The gunners of the schooner were terribly hampered in their work by the lack of matches for the guns; for the vessel was new, and the absence of these very essential articles was unnoticed until too late. The guns of one division were fired throughout the fight by Hiram Paulding,

a sixteen-year-old midshipman, who flashed his pistol at the priming of the guns as soon as aim was taken. When no gun was ready for his services, he rammed a ball into his weapon and discharged it at the enemy. The onslaught of the British was spirited and determined. Often they pressed up within a boat-hook's length of the schooner, only to be beaten back by her merciless fire. Sometimes so few were left alive in the galleys that they could hardly man the oars to pull out of the fight. In this way the "Ticonderoga" kept her enemies at bay while the battle was being decided between the "Saratoga" and the "Confiance."

For it was upon the issue of the conflict between these two ships, that victory or defeat depended. Each had her ally and satellite. Under the stern of the "Saratoga" lay the "Linnet," pouring in raking broadsides. "The "Confiance," in turn, was suffering from the well-directed fire of the "Eagle." The roar of the artillery was unceasing, and dense clouds of gunpowder-smoke hid the warring ships from the eyes of the eager spectators on shore. The "Confiance" was unfortunate in losing her gallant captain early in the action, while Macdonough was spared to fight his ship to the end. His gallantry and activity, however, led him to expose himself fearlessly; and twice he narrowly escaped death. He worked like a common sailor, loading and firing a favorite twenty-four-pound gun; and once, while on his knees, sighting the piece, a shot from the "Confiance" cut in two the spanker-boom, a great piece of which fell heavily upon the captain's head, stretching him senseless upon the deck. He lay motionless for two or three minutes, and his men mourned him as dead; but suddenly his activity returned, and he leaped to his feet, and was soon again in the thick of the fight. In less than five minutes the cry again arose, that the captain was killed. He had been standing at the breach of his favorite cannon, when a round shot took off the head of the captain of the gun, and dashed it with terrific force into the face of Macdonough, who was driven across the deck, and hurled against the bulwarks. He lay an instant, covered with the blood of the slain man; but, hearing his men cry that he was killed, he rushed among them, to cheer them on with his presence.

And, indeed, at this moment the crew of the "Saratoga" needed the presenee of their captain to cheer them on to further exertion. The red-hot shot of the "Confiance" had twice set fire to the American ship. The raking fire from the "Linnet" had dismounted carronades and long guns one by one, until but a single serviceable gun was left in the star-board battery. A too heavy charge dismounted this piece, and threw it down the hatchway, leaving the frigate without a single gun bearing upon the enemy. In such a plight the hearts of the crew might well fail them. But Macdonough was ready for the emergency. He still had his port broadside untouched, and he at once set to work to swing the ship round so that this battery could be brought to bear. An anchor was let fall astern, and the whole ship's company hauled in on the hawser, swinging the ship slowly around. It was a dangerous manœuvre; for, as the ship veered round, her stern was presented to the "Linnet," affording an opportunity for raking, which the gunners on that plucky little vessel immediately improved. But patience and hard pulling carried the day; and gradually the heavy frigate was turned sufficiently for the after gun to bear, and a gun's crew was at once called from the hawsers to open fire. One by one the guns swung into position, and soon the whole broadside opened with a roar.

Meanwhile the "Confiance" had attempted the same manœuvre. But her anchors were badly placed; and, though her people worked gallantly, they failed to get the ship round. She bore for some time the effective fire from the "Saratoga's" fresh broadside, but, finding that she could in no way return the fire, struck her flag, two hours and a quarter after the battle commenced. Beyond giving a hasty cheer, the people of the "Saratoga" paid little attention to the surrender of their chief enemy, but instantly turned their guns upon the "Linnet." In this combat the "Eagle" could take no part, and the thunder of her guns died away. Farther down the bay, the "Ticonderoga" had just driven away the last of the British galleys; so that the "Linnet" now alone upheld the cause of the enemy. She was terribly outmatched by her heavier foe, but her gallant captain Pring kept up a desperate defence. Her masts and rigging

were hopelessly shattered; and no course was open to her, save to surrender, or fight a hopeless fight. Capt. Pring sent off a lieutenant, in an open boat, to ascertain the condition of the "Confiance." The officer returned with the report that Capt. Downie was killed, and the frigate terribly cut up; and as by this time the water, pouring in the shot-holes in the "Linnet's" hull, had risen a foot above the lower deck, her flag was hauled down, and the battle ended in a decisive triumph for the Americans.

Terrible was the carnage, and many and strange the incidents, of this most stubbornly contested naval battle. All of the prizes were in a sinking condition. In the hull of the "Confiance" were a hundred and five shot-holes, while the "Saratoga" was pierced by fifty-five. Not a mast that would bear canvas was left standing in the British fleet; those of the flag-ship were splintered like bundles of matches, and the sails torn to rags. On most of the enemy's vessels, more than half of the crews were killed or wounded. The loss on the British side probably aggregated three hundred. Midshipman William Lee of the "Confiance" wrote home after the battle, "The havoc on both sides was dreadful. I don't think there are more than five of our men, out of three hundred, but what are killed or wounded. Never was a shower of hail so thick as the shot whistling about our ears. Were you to see my jacket, waistcoat, and trousers, you would be astonished to know how I escaped as I did; for they are literally torn all to rags with shot and splinters. The upper part of my hat was also shot away. There is one of the marines who was in the Trafalgar action with Lord Nelson, who says it was a mere flea-bite in comparison with this."

The Americans, though victorious, had suffered greatly. Their loss amounted to about two hundred men. The "Saratoga" had been cut up beyond the possibility of repair. Her decks were covered with dead and dying. The shot of the enemy wrought terrible havoc in the ranks of the American officers. Lieut. Stansbury of the "Ticonderoga" suddenly disappeared in the midst of the action; nor could any trace of him be found, until, two days later, his body, cut nearly in two by a round shot,

rose from the waters of the lake. Lieut. Vallette of the "Saratoga" was knocked down by the head of a sailor, sent flying by a cannon-ball. Some minutes later he was standing on a shot-box giving orders, when a shot took the box from beneath his feet, throwing him heavily upon the deck. Mr. Brum, the master, a veteran man-o'-war's man, was struck by a huge splinter, which knocked him down, and actually stripped every rag of clothing from his body. He was thought to be dead, but soon re-appeared at his post, with a strip of canvas about his waist, and fought bravely until the end of the action. Some days before the battle, a gentleman of Oswego gave one of the sailors a glazed tarpaulin hat, of the kind then worn by seamen. A week later the sailor re-appeared, and, handing him the hat with a semi-circular cut in the crown and brim, made while it was on his head by a cannon-shot, remarked calmly, "Look here, Mr. Sloane, how the damned John Bulls have spoiled my hat!"

The last British flag having been hauled down, an officer was sent to take possession of the "Confiance." In walking along her gun-deck, he accidentally ran against a ratline, by which one of her starboard guns was discharged. At this sound, the British galleys and gunboats, which had been lying quietly with their ensigns down, got out oars and moved off up the lake. The Americans had no vessels fit for pursuing them, and they were allowed to escape. In the afternoon the British officers came to the American flag-ship to complete the surrender. Macdonough met them courteously; and, on their offering their swords, put them back, saying, "Gentlemen, your gallant conduct makes you worthy to wear your weapons. Return them to their scabbards." By sundown the surrender was complete, and Macdonough sent off to the Secretary of the Navy a despatch, saying, "*Sir*,—The Almighty has been pleased to grant us a signal victory on Lake Champlain, in the capture of one frigate, one brig, and two sloops-of-war of the enemy."

Some days later, the captured ships, being beyond repair, were taken to the head of the lake, and scuttled. Some of the guns were found to be still loaded; and, in drawing the charges, one gun was found with a canvas bag containing two round shot rammed home, and wadded, without

any powder; another gun contained two cartridges and no shot; and a third had a wad rammed down before the powder, thus effectually preventing the discharge of the piece. The American gunners were not altogether guiltless of carelessness of this sort. Their chief error lay in ramming down so many shot upon the powder that the force of the explosion barely carried the missiles to the enemy. In proof of this, the side of the "Confiance" was thickly dotted with round shot, which had struck into, but failed to penetrate, the wood.

The result of this victory was immediate and gratifying. The land forces of the British, thus deprived of their naval auxiliaries, turned about, and retreated to Canada, abandoning forever their projected invasion. New York was thus saved by Macdonough's skill and bravery. Yet the fame he won by his victory was not nearly proportionate to the naval ability he showed, and the service he had rendered to his country. Before the popular adulation of Perry, Macdonough sinks into second place. One historian only gives him the pre-eminence that is undoubtedly his due. Says Mr. Theodore Roosevelt, in his admirable history, "The Naval War of 1812," "But Macdonough in this battle won a higher fame than any other commander of the war, British or American. He had a decidedly superior force to contend against, and it was solely owing to his foresight and resource that we won the victory. He forced the British to engage at a disadvantage by his excellent choice of position, and he prepared beforehand for every possible contingency. His personal prowess had already been shown at the cost of the rovers of Tripoli, and in this action he helped fight the guns as ably as the best sailor. His skill, seamanship, quick eye, readiness of resource, and indomitable pluck are beyond all praise. Down to the time of the civil war, he is the greatest figure in our naval history. A thoroughly religious man, he was as generous and humane as he was skilful and brave. One of the greatest of our sea captains, he has left a stainless name behind him."





CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE OCEAN.—THE WORK OF THE SLOOPS-OF-WAR.—LOSS OF THE “FROLIC.”—FRUITLESS CRUISE OF THE “ADAMS.”—THE “PEACOCK” TAKES THE “EPERVIER.”—THE CRUISE OF THE “WASP.”—SHE CAPTURES THE “REINDEER.”—SINKS THE “AVON.”—MYSTERIOUS END OF THE “WASP.”

THE opening of the year 1814 found the American coast still rigidly blockaded by the British men-of-war. Two or three of the enemy lay off the mouth of every considerable harbor, and were not to be driven from their post by the icy winds and storms of midwinter on the American coast. It was almost impossible for any American vessel to escape to sea, and a matter of almost equal difficulty for such vessels as were out to get into a home port. The frigate “President” had put to sea early in December, 1813, and after a cruise of eight weeks, during which the traditional ill-luck of the ship pursued her remorselessly, managed to dash into New York Harbor past the blockading squadron. At Boston the blockade was broken by the “Constitution.” She left port on the 1st of January, ran off to the southward, and cruised

for some weeks in the West Indies. Here she captured the British man-of-war schooner "Pictou," fourteen guns, and several merchant-vessels. She also fell in with the British thirty-six-gun frigate "Pique," which fled, and escaped pursuit by cutting through a narrow channel during a dark and squally night. The "Constitution" then returned to the coast of the United States, and narrowly escaped falling into the clutches of two British frigates. She managed to gain the shelter of Marblehead Harbor, and there remained until the latter part of the year.

But, while the larger vessels were thus accomplishing little or nothing, two or three small sloops-of-war, of a class newly built, slipped through the enemy's lines, and, gaining the open sea, fought one or two notable actions. Of these, the first vessel to get to sea was the new sloop-of-war "Frolic;" but her career was short and inglorious, for she had been at sea but a few weeks when she fell in with the enemy's frigate "Orpheus" and the schooner "Shelburne." A chase ensued, in which the American vessel threw overboard her guns and anchors, and started the water; but to no avail, for she was overhauled, and forced to surrender. Her service afloat was limited to the destruction of a Carthaginian privateer, which sunk before her guns, carrying down nearly a hundred men.

The "Adams," a vessel that had suffered many vicissitudes, — having been built for a frigate, then cut down to a sloop-of-war, and finally been saved asunder and converted into a corvette, — put to sea on the 18th of January, under the command of Capt. Charles Morris, formerly of the "Constitution." She laid her course straight to the eastward, and for some time cruised off the western coast of Africa and the Canary Isles. She met with but little success in this region, capturing only three brigs, — the cargo of one of which consisted of wine and fruit; and the second, of palm-oil and ivory. Abandoning the African coast, the corvette turned westward along the equator, and made for the West Indies. A large Indiaman fell in her way, and was brought to; but, before the Americans could take possession of their prize, a British fleet of twenty-five sail, with two men-of-war, hove in sight, and the "Adams" was forced to seek safety in flight. She put into Savannah for provisions and water, but,

hearing that the enemy was in force near by, worked out to sea, and made sail for another cruise. Capt. Morris took up a position on the limits of the Gulf Stream, near the Florida coast, in the expectation of cutting out an Indiaman from some passing convoy. The expected fleet soon came, but was under the protection of a seventy-four, two frigates, and three brigs, — a force sufficient to keep at bay the most audacious of corvettes. Morris hung about the convoy for two days, but saw no chance of eluding the watchful guards. He then crossed the Atlantic to the coast of Ireland. Here the "Adams" narrowly escaped capture; for she was sighted by a frigate, which gave chase, and would have overhauled her, had not the Americans thrown overboard some small cannon, and cut away their anchors. Thus lightened, the corvette sped away, and soon left her pursuers behind.

Continued ill-fortune now reduced the spirits of the sailors of the "Adams" to very low ebb. They were forced to struggle unceasingly against the fierce gales which in winter sweep the Atlantic. Their stock of food and water was giving out; and, to add to their distress, scurvy, the sailors' worst enemy, began to show itself in the ship. They had boldly run into the very waters in which the "Argus" had won so rich a reward, yet not a sail gladdened the eyes of the lookout on the "Adams." It was then with great disappointment that the jackies saw the prow of the corvette turned homeward, after a cruise that would bring them neither honor nor prize-money. The passage homeward was quickly made, and on the 16th of August the vessel was in soundings off the coast of Maine. Night fell, with a dense fog concealing all landmarks from view. Through the darkness the corvette sped on at a pace of eleven miles an hour, until, just as day was breaking, the cry of "Breakers ahead!" was followed by a heavy blow, indicating that the ship had struck. The force of the blow had not been sufficient to stave in the bottom, — a fortunate fact, for the hold was full of prisoners. Nevertheless, she was hard and fast aground, on a ledge of rock that lifted her bow six feet above her stern. Morris, who had rushed upon deck at the first alarm, was unable to make out the ship's position, and feared that they were on Cashes Ledge, a reef so

far from the land that it would have been impossible to save in the boats more than half the crew. He had determined, however, to instantly lower the boats and send them off in search of land, when a gust of wind, blowing away the fog, showed a beetling cliff not a hundred yards away. Rugged and inhospitable as was the coast thus exposed, it was better than an expanse of ocean; and at once Morris set to work landing his prisoners, and the sick, of whom the "Adams" had nearly sixty. With spare sails, tents were put up on the beach; and, stores having been landed, the comfort of all was assured, in case the ship should go to pieces. What the desolate shore was to which they were thus forced to turn for shelter, no one knew.

All hands now turned to at the capstan, in the hopes of getting the vessel off; and about noon, the tide having reached its flood, she gradually slid off the ledge into deep water. After trying the pumps, to see if any serious leak had been started, the difficult task of taking the ship out of the labyrinth of reefs in which she lay was begun. For more than two miles their course lay through a narrow and tortuous channel, bordered on either side with jagged reefs; but the corvette safely threaded her way between the rocks, and soon lay floating in deep water. The next morning the fog blew away; and the voyagers discovered to their astonishment that they were off Mount Desert, instead of near Portsmouth as they had expected.

To return into the cluster of reefs after the little colony of invalids and prisoners that had been left behind, would have been mere folly: so sending two fishing-boats to search out the shore party, and carry them to the nearest village, the "Adams" continued her course, intending to put into the Penobscot River. While making for this point, a sail was sighted, which proved to be the British brig-sloop "Rifleman." The corvette gave chase, but the Englishman kept well in the offing; and, as the condition of the American crew was such that to lead them into action would have been imprudent, Morris abandoned the pursuit, and, putting into the Penobscot, dropped anchor off Hampden. Here, for the present, we will leave the "Adams."

The "Peacock" — a second of the new sloops-of-war, bearing the name of a captured British vessel — put out from New York in March, and made her way to the southward, selecting as her cruising station the waters off the coast of Florida. For some time it seemed that the exertions of the sailors were to be of no avail. Not a sail was to be seen, and the chances for prize-money seemed to be small indeed. But on the 29th of March three merchant-vessels were made out in the offing; while a heavy-built, square-rigged, trim-looking craft that hovered about them was evidently a man-of-war. The strangers seemed to have sighted the American vessel; for the merchantmen were seen to hastily haul up and run off to the north-east, while the man-of-war edged away for the American ship.

The stranger was His British Majesty's brig sloop-of-war "Epervier," of eighteen guns, and carrying a crew of one hundred and twenty-eight men. The "Peacock" was a ship-sloop of twenty-two guns, with a crew of one hundred and sixty-six men. The advantage, therefore, lay with the Americans; but, in the battle that ensued, the damage they inflicted upon the enemy was out of any proportion to their excess of strength.

The two ships bore down gallantly upon each other, and at a little after ten in the morning passed, exchanging heavy broadsides. The shot of each took effect in the rigging; but the "Peacock" suffered the more, having her foreyard totally disabled, — an injury that compelled her to run large during the rest of the action, and forego all attempts at manœuvring. The two vessels having passed each other, the "Epervier" eased off, and returned to the fight, running on a parallel course with the American ship. The interchange of broadsides then became very rapid; but the British marksmanship was poor, and few of their shot took effect. The "Epervier," on the contrary, suffered severely from the American fire, which took effect in her hull, dismounting several guns, and so injuring the brig that a British naval officer, writing of the action some years later, said, "The most disgraceful part of the affair was that our ship was cut to pieces, and the enemy hardly scratched."

The injury aloft which both vessels sustained caused the battle to

take on the character of an action at long range. Under such conditions, the victory was assured to the side showing the best gunnery. For a moment only did it seem that the vessels were likely to come to close quarters, and the English captain seized that occasion to call up his boarders. But they refused, saying, "She's too heavy for us." And a few minutes later the Englishman hauled down his flag, having lost nine killed or mortally wounded, and fourteen wounded. The Americans had suffered but little; only two men being injured, and these but slightly. The shot of the enemy had passed through the rigging of the "Peacock," while the "Epervier" had been hulled forty-five times.

The "Epervier" proved to be a valuable prize. In her hold specie to the amount of one hundred and eighteen thousand dollars was found; and, when the brig was sold to the United States Government, she brought fifty-five thousand dollars: so that the prize-money won by that action kept the sailors in good-humor for many months to come. But, before the prize could be safely carried into an American port, she had a gantlet to run, in which she narrowly escaped capture. After the wreck of battle had been cleared away, the brig and her captor made for Savannah, but were sighted and chased by two British frigates. The "Peacock," in the hope of drawing away the pursuers, left her prize, and headed out to sea. One frigate only followed her, and the other pressed on hotly after the "Epervier," which, to avoid capture, was forced to run into shallow water, whither the heavy frigate could not follow her. But she was not to escape so easily; for the boats of the frigate were lowered, filled with armed men, and set out in pursuit of the brig, which moved but slowly before the light breeze then blowing. The boats soon overhauled the fugitive, and escape seemed hopeless; for the "Epervier" was manned by a prize-crew of only sixteen men. But Lieut. Nicholson, who was in command, determined to try the effect of bluster. Accordingly he leaped upon the taffrail, with a speaking-trumpet in his hand, and shouted out orders as if calling a huge crew to quarters. The British, who were within easy range, stopped their advance, and, fearing a destructive broadside from the brig's guns, turned and fled precipitately. The "Epervier"

continued her course, and reached Savannah in safety on the 1st of May. The "Peacock" reached the same port four days later.

At the moment when the captured "Epervier," flying the stars and stripes, was proudly making her way up the harbor of Savannah amid the plaudits of the people of the little city, there sailed from Portsmouth, N.H., a vessel that was destined to fight a good fight for the honor of that starry banner; and, after winning a glorious victory, to disappear forever from the face of the ocean, carrying to some unknown grave a crew of as brave hearts as ever beat under uniforms of navy blue.

This was the new sloop of war "Wasp," named after the gallant little craft that had been taken by the British after her capture of the "Frolic." She was a stanch three-master, carrying eleven guns to a broadside. Her crew was purely American, not a foreigner among them; but all trained seamen from the seaboard villages and towns of New England,—the homes at that time of probably the hardest seafaring population in the world. Capt. Blakely, who commanded the vessel, had been attached to the "Enterprise" for some time, but had been ordered to the command of the "Wasp" a few days before the former vessel fought her successful battle with the "Boxer." Blakely, while in command of the "Enterprise," had greatly desired to meet an enemy worthy of his metal. Great, then, was his chagrin, when the "Enterprise," two weeks after he quitted her, fought her gallant battle. In a letter written in January, 1814, he says, "I shall ever view as one of the most unfortunate events of my life having quitted the 'Enterprise' at the moment I did. Had I remained in her a fortnight longer, my name might have been classed with those who stand so high. I cannot but consider it a mortifying circumstance that I left her but a few days before she fell in with the only enemy upon this station with which she could have creditably contended. I confess I felt heartily glad when I received my order to take command of the 'Wasp,' conceiving that there was no hope of doing any thing in the 'Enterprise.' But when I heard of the contest of the latter ship, and witnessed the great delay in the equipment of the former, I had no cause to congratulate myself. The 'Peacock' has ere this spread her plumage to the winds, and the 'Frolic'

will soon take her revels on the ocean ; but the 'Wasp' will, I fear, remain for some time a dull, harmless drone in the waters of her country."

Notwithstanding his impatience, Blakely was forced to endure the restraints of Portsmouth navy-yard for nearly three months, while the "Wasp" was fitting out ; but when she did finally get to sea, on May 1, 1814, she proved herself to be far from a "dull, harmless drone." Slipping unobserved through the British blockading line, the "Wasp" made straight for the European coast before a fresh wind, and was soon cruising in the chops of the English channel, where the "Argus" had won her laurels and met with her defeat. Many English merchantmen were captured and burned, and the terror that spread in English shipping circles recalled the days of the "Argus."

At daylight on the 28th of June, the "Wasp" sighted two merchantmen, and straightway gave chase. Soon a third vessel was discovered on the weather-beam ; and, abandoning the vessels first sighted, the American bore down upon the stranger. She proved to be the "Reindeer," a British brig-sloop of eighteen guns, carrying a crew of one hundred and eighteen men. Although the British vessel was by no means a match in weight of metal for the "Wasp," her captain, William Manners, brought her into action with a cool gallantry which well justified his reputation as one of the bravest men in the British navy.

At ten o'clock in the morning the ships were near enough to each other to exchange signals, but several hours were spent in manœuvring for the weather-gage ; so that it was not until after three in the afternoon that the action fairly opened. The day was admirably suitable for a naval battle. Light clouds floated across the sky, and the gentle breeze that was blowing had sufficient strength to propel the ships without careening them. The surface of the ocean was unusually calm for that quarter, in which a rather choppy sea is usually running. Before the light breeze the "Wasp" came down upon her foe, bows on, with her decks cleared for action, and the men at their quarters. On the top-gallant forecastle of the "Reindeer" was mounted a twelve-pound carronade, and the action was opened by the discharge of this piece. In the position she then held,

the "Wasp" was unable to reply; and her crew had to bear five effective shots from this gun without being able to fire a shot in return, — an ordeal that less well-disciplined crews might not have endured. For nine minutes the Americans returned not a shot; but then the "Wasp" luffed up, firing the guns from aft forward as they bore. The two ships were now lying broadside to broadside, not twenty yards apart, and every shot told. For ten minutes this position was held, and the two crews worked like Furies in loading and firing the great guns. The roar of the cannon was incessant, and the recoil of the heavy explosions deadened what little way the ships had on when fire was opened. Capt. Manners was too old an officer not to know, that, in an artillery duel of that kind, the victory would surely rest with the side that carried the heaviest guns: so he ran his vessel aboard the "Wasp" on the starboard quarter, intending to board and carry the day with the stubborn, dashing gallantry shown by British seamen when once led to an enemy's deck. At the ringing notes of the bugle, calling up the boarders, the British gathered aft, their faces begrimed with gunpowder, their arms bare, and their keen cutlasses firmly clutched in their strong right hands. The Americans took the alarm at once, and crowded forward to repel the enemy. The marines, whose hard duty it is in long-range fighting to stand with military impassiveness, drawn up in line on deck, while the shot whistle by them, and now and then cut great gaps in their straight lines, — the marines came aft, with their muskets loaded and bayonets fixed. Before them were sailors with sharp-pointed boarding-pikes, ready to receive the enemy should he come aboard; while close under the bulwarks were grouped the boarders, ready with cutlass and pistol to beat back the flood of men that should come pouring over the side. The grating of the ships' sides told that the vessels were touching; and the next instant the burly British seamen, looming up like giants, as they dashed through the dense murkiness of the powder-smoke, were among the Americans, cutting and firing right and left. From the deck of the "Reindeer" the marines kept up a constant fire of musketry, to which the sea-soldiers of the "Wasp" responded vigorously. Marksmen posted in the tops of each vessel picked off men from their enemy's decks, choosing generally the officers.



BOARDING THE REINDEER.

Sharp and bloody though the British attack was, the boarders could make no way against the stubborn stand of the Americans. Capt. Manners, seeing his men beaten back, sprang forward to rally them. He was desperately wounded. A gun-shot had passed through his thighs, and a



THE CAPTAIN OF THE "REINDEER."

grape-shot had cut across the calves of his legs ; but, maimed and bleeding to death as he was, he leaped into the rigging, and, cheering and waving his sword, called to his men to follow him to the decks of the Yankee. The Britons rallied nobly under the encouragement of their brave captain, and again advanced to the assault. But the figure of the daring officer, as he

stood thus before his men, waving his sword and calling on them to come on, caught the eye of one of the men in the "Wasp's" main-top; and the next instant a ball crashed into the captain's brain, and he fell heavily to the deck, with his dying eyes turned upwards toward the flag in whose service he had given his life.

Seeing the British captain fall and the men waver, Capt. Blakely with a cheer called up the boarders of the "Wasp;" and in an instant a stream of shouting sailors, cutlass in hand, was pouring over the hammock-nettings, and driving the foe backward on his own decks. The British still fought stubbornly; but their numbers were terribly thinned, and their officers had fallen one by one, until now the captain's clerk was the highest officer left. Seeing his men falling back before the resistless torrent of boarders, this gentleman finally struck the flag; and the battle ended, twenty-seven minutes after the "Reindeer" had fired the opening gun, and eighteen after the "Wasp" had responded.

The execution and damage done on the "Reindeer" by the "Wasp's" shot were appalling. Of her crew of one hundred and eighteen men, thirty-three were killed or fatally wounded, and thirty-four were wounded. The havoc wrought among her officers has already been mentioned. Evidence of the accuracy and skill of the American gunners was to be seen in the fact that the brig was completely cut to pieces in the line of her ports. Her decks were swept clean of boats, spars, and rigging. Her masts were badly shattered, and her fore-mast soon went by the board. The "Wasp" had suffered severely, but was in much better condition than her captured adversary. Eleven of her crew were killed or mortally wounded, and fifteen were wounded severely or slightly. She had been hulled by six round and many grape shot, and her fore-mast had been cut by a twenty-four-pound shot. A few hours' work cleared from her decks all trace of the bloody fight, and she was in condition for another action. But it would have been folly to try to get the crippled "Reindeer" to port from that region, swarming with British cruisers: so Capt. Blakely took the prisoners on the "Wasp," put a few of the wounded on a neutral vessel that happened to pass, and, burning the

prize, made his way to the harbor of L'Orient. He had fought a brave fight, and come out victor after a desperate contest. But, though defeated, the plucky British might well boast of the gallant manner in which they engaged an enemy so much their superior in strength. History nowhere records a more gallant death than that of the British captain, who fell



THE END OF THE "REINDEER."

leading his men in a dashing but vain attempt to retrieve the day by boarding. In its manœuvring, in the courage and discipline of the crews, and in the gallantry of the two captains, the action of the "Wasp" and the "Reindeer" may well go down to history as a model naval duel of the age of sails.

The "Wasp" remained in port for several weeks, occupying the time in refitting, and filling the gaps in her crew by enlistment from the

American privateers which then were to be seen occasionally in every port of the world. She then put out to sea, and soon fell in with a convoy of ten British merchantmen, under the protection of the seventy-four "Armada." Though he had no intention of giving battle to the line-of-battle ship, Blakely determined to capture one of the merchantmen; and to this end the "Wasp" hung upon the skirts of the convoy, making rapid dashes now at one vessel, then at another, and keeping the seventy-four in constant anxiety. Finally the swift little cruiser actually succeeded in capturing one of the vessels, and escaping before the heavy seventy-four could get to the scene of the conflict. The prize proved to be a valuable one, for she was laden with iron and brass cannon and military stores.

Towards nightfall of the same day, Sept. 1, 1814, four more sail were sighted; and the "Wasp" at once made off in chase of the most weatherly. At eight o'clock the "Wasp" had gained so rapidly upon the chase, that the latter began firing with her stern chaser, and soon after opened with one of her lee guns. All the time the enemy kept up a vigorous signalling with rockets, lanterns, and guns. By half-past nine the "Wasp" was within hailing-distance, and an officer posted on the bow hailed the stranger several times; but as she returned no satisfactory answer, and refused to heave to, the "Wasp" opened upon her with a twelve-pound carronade, and soon after poured a broadside into her quarter. The two ships ploughed through the black water, under full sail, side by side. The Americans had no idea of the identity of their assailant, but, by the flashes of the guns, could see that she was a heavy brig. Her ports gleamed brightly with battle-lanterns; and the crowds of sailors in the tops, and the regularity of her fire, showed that she was a man-of-war with a well-disciplined crew, and no mere marauding privateer. For a time this running fight continued at such short range that the only American injured was struck by a wad from the enemy's cannon. The British gunners were poor marksmen, and the "Wasp" suffered but little; but it was evident that the American fire was taking effect, for gun after gun on the enemy was silenced. At ten o'clock the Americans,

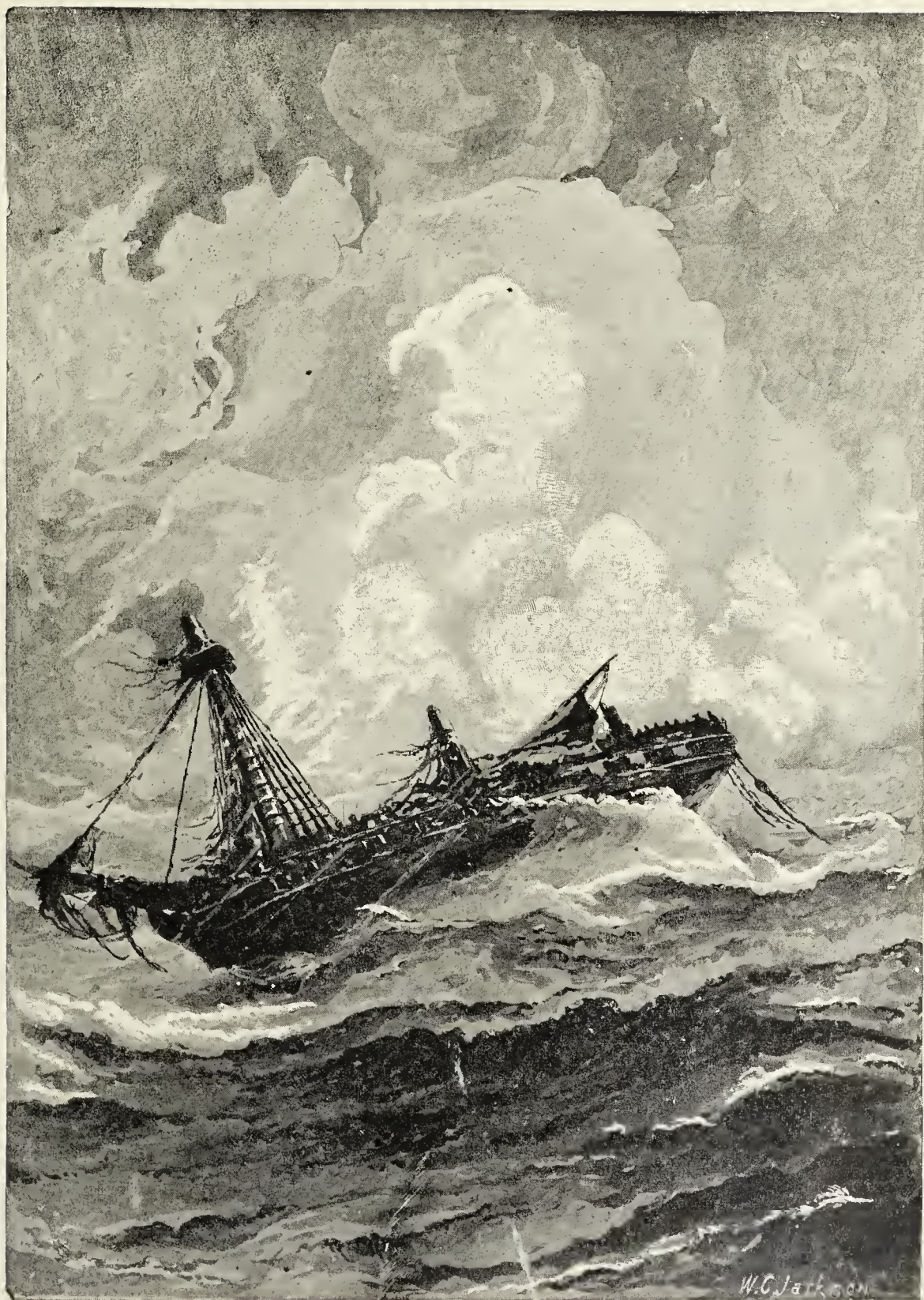
receiving no response to their carronade, stopped firing; and Capt. Blakely, seizing a speaking-trumpet, shouted across the water, "Have you struck?" No answer came, and the enemy began a feeble fire. The "Wasp" let fly another broadside, and Blakely repeated the question. This time an affirmative response came through the darkness; and the "Wasp" stopped firing, and made preparations to take possession of her prize. Just as the boat was being lowered from the davits, the lookout's cry of "Sail, ho!" checked the proceedings. Through the black night a cloud of canvas could be seen far astern, denoting the presence of another ship, probably an enemy. The drums of the "Wasp" beat fiercely; and the men trooped back to their quarters, ready for a second battle. But in the mean time two more sail hove in sight, and there remained to the "Wasp" nothing but flight. She accordingly made off into the darkness, receiving one broadside from one of the newly arrived men-of-war as she departed. So suddenly was she forced to fly, that she was unable to learn the name and condition of the vessel she had forced to surrender.

It became known in the United States later that the "Wasp's" adversary in the battle in the darkness was the British sloop-of-war "Avon," of eighteen guns. She was badly cut up by the fire of the American gunners, losing her main-mast early in the action. At the time she surrendered, she was in a sinking condition; and, had it not been for the timely arrival of the brig-sloop "Castilian" and the "Tartarus," both British, the crew of the "Avon" would have been prisoners on the "Wasp," or carried to the bottom in the shattered hulk of their own ship. The loss on the "Avon" was ten killed and thirty-two wounded, while on the "Wasp" but three men were injured.

Of all this the gallant Capt. Blakely was ignorant; and, indeed, it is probable that he never knew with whom he had fought his last battle. For the subsequent history of the "Wasp" is more tragic in its unfathomable mystery than is the fate of the bravest ship ever sent to the bottom by the broadsides of an enemy. What was the end of the "Wasp," and where her bones now lie, no one knows. For some little time after her battle with the "Avon," her movements can be traced. Sept. 12, she

captured the British brig "Three Brothers," and scuttled her; two days later, the brig "Bacchus" met the same fate at her hands. Sept. 21, she took the brig "Atlanta," eight guns; and, this being a valuable prize, Midshipman Geisinger of the "Wasp" was put on board, and took her safely to Savannah. He brought the last news that was heard of the ill-fated cruiser for many years. Months passed, and lengthened into years; and still the "Wasp" came not into port, nor could any trace of her whereabouts be found. As time passed on, the attempts to account for her delay changed into theories as to the cause of her total disappearance. All sorts of rumors were afloat. According to one account, the ship was wrecked on the African coast, and her gallant lads were ending their weary lives as slaves to the turbaned Moors of Barbary. Another theory was based on the rumor that an English frigate went into Cadiz much crippled, and with her crew severely injured, and reported that she had been engaged with a heavy American corvette, which had so suddenly disappeared that she was thought to have sunk with all on board. But, as time passed on, the end of the "Wasp" was forgotten by all save a few whose hearts ached for some of the gallant lads thus blotted from the face of the earth.

Years after, the fate of the daring cruiser was again brought into remembrance by fresh news curiously found. When the officers and crew of the "Essex," after that vessel's gallant battle with the "Phoebe" and "Cherub," were sent to the United States under parole, two officers remained at Valparaiso, to give testimony before the prize-court. These gentlemen were Lieut. McKnight, and Mr. Lyman a master's mate. After going to Brazil in the "Phoebe," the two officers took passage in a Swedish brig bound for England. Months passed; and, nothing being heard from them, their friends became alarmed for their safety. In that time, before the day of the telegraph and steam transportation, many things might have easily detained the two officers for a year or more, and nothing be heard of them. But, when two years had passed, inquiries began to be made as to their fate, both by their friends and the naval authorities. The first step was to find the vessel upon which they had left Brazil. This was a work of time; so that it was many years after the disappear-



THE END OF THE WASP.

ance of the officers when the brig was found lying at a London dock. She was the brig "Adonis," and the master proved to be the same who had commanded her when the two officers had taken passage. He readily recalled the circumstance, but claimed that the two passengers had left him in mid-ocean to go aboard an American man-of-war; and in proof of this he brought out the log-book, and, turning back to the year 1814, pointed out the following entries:—

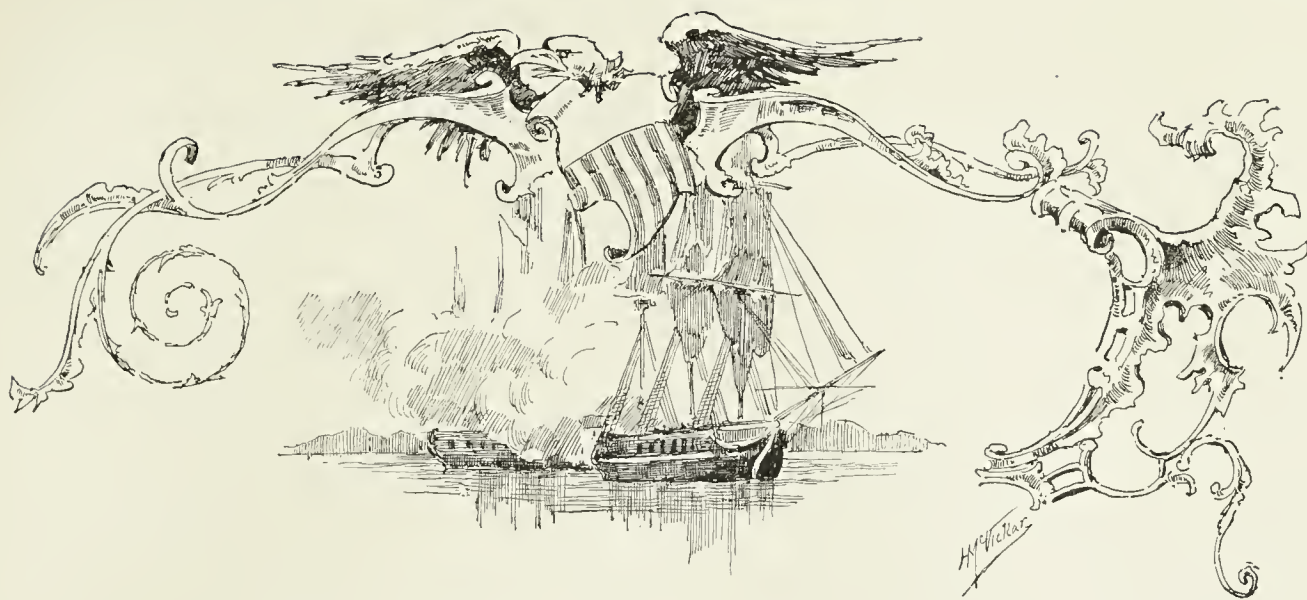
"Aug. 23. — Left Rio de Janeiro; Stephen Decatur McKnight and James Lyman, passengers for England.

"Oct. 9. — At eight o'clock in the morning discovered a strange sail giving chase to us, and fired several guns; she gaining very fast. At half-past ten o'clock hove to, and was boarded by an officer dressed in an English doctor's uniform; the vessel also hoisted an English ensign. The officer proceeded to examine my ship's papers, etc., likewise the letter-bags, and took from one of them a letter to the victualling office, London. Finding I had two American officers as passengers, he immediately left the ship, and went on board the sloop-of-war. He shortly after returned, took the American gentlemen with him, and went a second time on board the ship. In about half an hour he returned, with Messrs. McKnight and Lyman; and they informed me that the vessel was the United States sloop-of-war 'Wasp,' commanded by Capt. Blakely, or Blake, last from France, where she had refitted; had lately sunk the 'Reindeer,' English sloop-of-war, and another vessel, which sunk without their being able to save a single person, or learn the vessel's name; that Messrs. McKnight and Lyman had now determined to leave me and go on board the 'Wasp;' paid me their passage in dollars, at 5*s.* 9*d.*; and, having taken their luggage on board, the 'Wasp' made sail to the southward. Shortly after they had left, I discovered that Lieut. McKnight had left his writing-desk behind; and I immediately made signal for the 'Wasp' to return, and stood towards her. They, observing my signal, stood back, came alongside, and sent their boat on board for the writing-desk; after which they sent me a log-line and some other presents, and made all sail in a direction for the line, and, I have reason to suppose, for the convoy that passed on Thursday previous."

And so the "Wasp," with her ill-fated crew thus re-enforced, passed forever from the sight of man. What was her course after leaving the

"Adonis," none may ever know. Whether some chance spark, touching the deadly stores of her magazine, sent vessel and crew to a sudden but merciful death; or whether, after gallantly battling with some fierce tropical hurricane, she drifted about the trackless ocean a helpless hulk, with a slowly dying crew, carried hither and yon before the winds and the currents, until her timbers, rotting asunder, gave a watery sepulchre to her crew of lifeless bodies, must remain a mystery until the day when the sea shall give up its dead. But, until that day comes, the gallant deeds done by vessel and crew for the flag under which they served should keep the names of the "Wasp" and her men ever memorable in the annals of the great nation whose infancy they so gallantly protected.





CHAPTER XV.

OPERATIONS ON THE NEW ENGLAND COAST.—THE BOMBARDMENT OF STONINGTON.—
DESTRUCTION OF THE UNITED STATES CORVETTE “ADAMS.”—OPERATIONS ON CHESA-
PEAKE BAY.—WORK OF BARNEY’S BARGE FLOTILLA.—ADVANCE OF THE BRITISH UPON
WASHINGTON.—DESTRUCTION OF THE CAPITOL.—OPERATIONS AGAINST BALTIMORE.—
BOMBARDMENT OF FORT McHENRY.

THE remaining work of the British blockading squadrons along the Atlantic Coast demands some attention, and some account must be given of certain land actions which were inseparably connected with the course of naval events. This narrative can well be divided into two parts, each dealing with the operations of one section of the blockading fleet; thus tracing the course of events up to the close of the war on the New England coast, before taking up the proceedings on the Chesapeake station.

It will be remembered that Decatur had been checked in his attempt to break the blockade at the eastern end of Long Island Sound, and was forced to take the frigates “United States” and “Macedonian,” and the sloop-of-war “Hornet,” into New London Harbor. Early in December, 1813, he determined to try to slip out; and choosing a dark night, when wind and tide were in his favor, he dropped down the bay, and was about

to put to sea, when bright blue lights blazed up on either side of the harbor's mouth, and the plan was exposed by the treachery of some party never detected. After this failure, the two frigates returned up the river, where they remained until the end of the war. The "Hornet" managed to get to sea, and did good service before peace was declared.

In April, 1814, the British blockaders on the New England coast began active operations by sending an expedition up the Connecticut River to Pautopaug Point, where the invaders landed, spiked the guns of a small battery, and destroyed twenty-two vessels. Thence they proceeded down the river, burning a few more craft on the way, and escaped safely to their ships; although a party of militia, and sailors and marines from Decatur's vessels, attempted to cut them off. Shortly after this occurrence, a fleet of American gunboats attacked the blockading squadron off New London, and succeeded in inflicting serious damages upon the enemy.

In June, the enemy's depredations extended to the Massachusetts coast. The little village of Wareham was the first sufferer. A sudden descent made by boats' crews from the frigates "Superb" and "Nimrod" so completely surprised the inhabitants, that the enemy burned the shipping at the wharves, set fire to a factory, and retreated before the villagers fully comprehended the blow that had fallen upon them. Like occurrences took place at other coast-wise towns; and, in every case, the militia proved powerless to check the enemy. All up and down the New England coast, from Maine to the mouth of the Connecticut River, the people were panic-stricken; and hardly a night passed without witnessing the flames of some bonfire kindled by the British out of American property.

In August, 1814, Commodore Hardy appeared off Stonington with a fleet of several vessels, headed by the seventy-four "Ramillies." Casting anchor near shore, he sent to the mayor and selectmen the following curt note: "Not wishing to destroy the unoffending inhabitants residing in the town of Stonington, one hour is granted them, from the receipt of this, to remove out of town." This message naturally caused great

consternation ; and, while messengers were sent in all directions to call together the militia, the answer was returned to the fleet : " We shall defend the place to the last extremity. Should it be destroyed, we will perish in its ruins." And, having thus defied the enemy, the farmers and fishermen who inhabited the town set about preparing for its defence. The one battery available for service consisted of two eighteen-pounders and a four-pounder, mounted behind earth breastworks. The gunners were



THE DESCENT ON WAREHAM.

put under the command of an old sailor, who had been impressed into the British navy, where he served four years. The skill he thus acquired in gunnery, he now gladly used against his former oppressors. It was near nightfall when the British opened fire ; and they kept up a constant cannonade with round shot, bombs, Congreve rockets, and carcasses until near midnight, without doing the slightest damage. The bursting shells, the fiery rockets, and the carcasses filled with flaming chemicals, fairly filled the little wooden village with fire ; but the exertions of the people prevented the spread of the flames. The fleet ceased firing at midnight,

but there was no peace for the villagers. Militiamen were pouring in from the country round about, laborers were at work throwing up breast-work, carriers were dashing about in search of ammunition, and all was activity, until, with the first gleam of daylight, the fire of the ships was re-opened. The Americans promptly responded, and soon two eighteen-pound shot hulled the brig "Despatch." For an hour or two a rapid fire was kept up; then, the powder giving out, the Americans spiked their largest gun, and, nailing a flag to the battery flag-staff, went in search of more ammunition. The British did not land; and the Americans, finding six kegs of powder, took the gun to a blacksmith, who drilled out the spike, and the action continued. So vigorous and well directed was the fire of the Americans, that the "Despatch" was forced to slip her cables and make off to a place of safety. That afternoon a truce was declared, which continued until eight the next morning. By that time, the Americans had assembled in sufficient force to defeat any landing party the enemy could send ashore. The bombardment of the town continued; but the aim of the British was so inconceivably poor, that, during the three days' firing, no damage was done by their shot. A more ludicrous fiasco could hardly be imagined, and the Americans were quick to see the comical side of the affair. Before departing, the British fired over fifteen tons of lead and iron into the town. A quantity of this was picked up by the Americans, and offered for sale. In a New York paper appeared the advertisement, —

"Just received, and offered for sale, about three tons of round shot, consisting of six, nine, twelve, eighteen, twenty-four, and thirty-two pounds; very handsome, being a small proportion of those which were fired from His Britannic Majesty's ships on the unoffending inhabitants of Stonington, in the recent *brilliant* attack on that place. Likewise a few carcasses, in good order, weighing about two hundred pounds each. Apply," etc.

A popular bard of the time set forth in rollicking verse the exploits of the British gunners : —

“They killed a goose, they killed a hen,
Three hogs they wounded in a pen;
They dashed away,—and pray what then?
That was not taking Stonington.

“The shells were thrown, the rockets flew;
But not a shell of all they threw—
Though every house was full in view—
Could burn a house in Stonington.”

With this affair, in which the British expended ammunition to the amount of fifty thousand dollars, and lost twenty men killed and fifty wounded, active offensive operations along the Connecticut coast ended. Farther north, however, the British still raided towns and villages, showing more spirit in their attacks than did Hardy at Stonington. Eastport, Me., was captured in July, and converted into a veritable British colony. The inhabitants who remained in the town were forced to take an oath of allegiance to Great Britain; fortifications were thrown up, and an arsenal established; King George's officials were placed in the custom-house, and thenceforward until the end of the war the town was virtually British. Encouraged by this success, the enemy undertook a more difficult task. A formidable fleet of men-of-war and transports, bearing almost ten thousand troops, was fitted out at Halifax for the purpose of reducing to British rule all that part of Maine lying between Passamaquoddy Bay and the Penobscot River. This expedition set sail from Halifax on the 26th of August, bound for Machias; but on the voyage down the coast of Maine the brig “Rifleman” was encountered, and from her the presence of the United States corvette “Adams” in the Penobscot River was learned. It will be remembered that the “Adams,” before entering the river, had chased the British brig. Upon learning this, the British naval commander, Admiral Griffiths, pressed forward to the mouth of the Penobscot, and, anchoring there, despatched a land and naval expedition up the river for the capture of the corvette.

When the news of this advancing force reached Capt. Morris, the

"Adams" was partially out of water, dismantled, and in the hands of the ship carpenters, who were repairing the injuries she had received on the rocks off Mount Desert. The ship herself was utterly defenceless, but Morris made strenuous attempts to collect a land force to defend her. He managed to rally a few hundred militia-men, who, with the sailors and marines, were routed by the enemy on the night of the 3d of September. Finding that the enemy's forces were not to be driven back by so small a body of men, Morris retreated, first setting fire to the corvette, which was totally destroyed before the British came up.

The retreating sailors were then forced to march over rugged roads to Portsmouth, N.H.; and, as walking was an exercise they were little accustomed to, many suffered severely from the unusual exertion. The difficulty of getting provisions along the road led the men to separate into several parties; but, notwithstanding the opportunities thus afforded for desertion, all who were not broken down by the long march ultimately reported for duty at the Portsmouth navy-yard.

Along the Southern sea-board the course of the war was even more disastrous to the Americans. Intelligence which reached the national authorities in the spring of 1814 led them to believe that the British were planning an expedition for the capture of Washington. Grave as was the danger, the authorities were slow to move; and though in July the Government called for fifteen thousand troops, and gave their command to Gen. Winder, yet the actual defensive force about the national capital consisted of but a few hundred militia. The naval defence was intrusted to the veteran Commodore Barney, who had served with distinction in the Revolution, and during the early years of the second war with Great Britain had commanded the Baltimore privateer "Rossie." The force put under Barney's command consisted of twenty-six gun-boats and barges, manned by nine hundred men. Chiefly by his own energetic exertions, this force was ready for service in April; and by June the crews were drilled and disciplined, and the commanders schooled in the tactics of squadron evolutions. On the 1st of that month occurred the first brush with the enemy. The American flotilla was then lying in Chesapeake Bay, a little



THE BATTLE OF THE BARGES.

below the mouth of the Patuxent; and, a portion of the enemy's squadron coming within range, Barney ordered out his forces in chase. The British, outnumbered, fled down the bay; but, though Barney was rapidly overhauling them, he saw his hopes of victory shattered by the sudden appearance of His Britannic Majesty's seventy-four gun ship "Dragon." Thus re-enforced, it became the turn of the British to pursue; and the Americans retreated, firing constantly as they fled. The British continuing their advance, Barney was forced to take shelter in the Patuxent River; and he was gradually forced up that stream as far as the mouth of St. Leonard's Creek. The enemy then, feeling certain that the Americans were fairly entrapped, anchored at the mouth of the river, and awaited re-enforcements. These soon arrived; and on the 8th of the month the enemy's forces, consisting of a frigate, brig, and two schooners, moved up the river to the mouth of the creek. Farther they could not go, owing to shoal-water; but they fitted out a small flotilla of barges, and sent them on up the creek. With this enemy Commodore Barney was ready to come to close quarters; and he moved down upon the British, who quickly retreated to the shelter of their ships. Two or three such sham attacks were made by the enemy, but not until the 10th of the month did they actually give battle to the Americans.

On the morning of that day the British advanced in force to the attack; and the peaceful little creek was ablaze with flags and bright uniforms, and the wooded shores echoed back the strains of martial music. Twenty-one barges, one rocket-boat, and two schooners formed the British column of attack, which moved grandly up the creek, with the bands playing patriotic airs, and the sailors, confident of victory, cheering lustily. Eight hundred men followed the British colors. Against this force Barney advanced with but five hundred sailors. His sloop and gun-vessels he left at anchor, as being too unwieldy for the narrow shoal-waters of St. Leonard's Creek; and he met the enemy's flotilla with but thirteen barges. The enemy opened the action at long range with rockets and howitzers. The former were terrible missiles in an action of this character, corresponding to the shells of modern naval warfare. Some idea of their destructive

ness may be derived from the fact, that one of them, fired at long range, exploded and set fire to a boat, after having first passed through the body of one of her crew. Barney had no rockets; and, as the combat at long range was telling upon his men, he at once dashed forward into the midst of the enemy. Soon the barges were engaged in desperate hand-to-hand conflicts. The sailors, grappling with their adversary's craft, fought with pistol and cutlass across the gunwales. Barney, in a small barge with twenty men, dashed about, now striking a blow in aid of some overmatched American boat, then cheering on some laggard, or applauding some deed of gallantry that occurred in his sight. Major William Barney, son of the commodore, saw an American barge on fire, and deserted by her crew who feared the explosion of her magazine. Running his boat alongside, he jumped into the flaming craft; and by dint of bailing in water, and rocking her from side to side, he succeeded in saving the barge. For more than an hour the action raged, both sides fighting with great vigor and gallantry; but the Americans having pierced the British line, the enemy, falling into confusion, turned, and strained every muscle to gain the protection of their ship's guns. The Americans followed in hot pursuit; but their course was abruptly checked at the mouth of the creek by a British schooner, whose eighteen guns commanded respect. For a moment the pursuing barges fell back; then, choosing advantageous positions, they opened fire upon the schooner with such effect that she soon turned to escape. She succeeded in getting under the protecting guns of the frigate and sloop-of-war, but was so cut to pieces in the short action that she was run aground and abandoned. The larger vessels now opened fire upon Barney's forces; and the flotilla, after a few shots of defiance, returned to its quarters up the creek.

For the next two weeks all was quiet along the shores of the Patuxent and St. Leonard's Creek. The enemy had learned wisdom from their late defeat, and contented themselves with blockading the mouth of the creek, and leaving Barney undisturbed in his retreat. But the doughty commodore had no idea of being thus confined, and during the time of quiet made preparations for an attempt to break the blockade. Land

forces from Washington were sent down to aid in this attempt; and two pieces of artillery were to be mounted on a hill at the mouth of the creek, and thence throw red-hot shot into the enemy's ships. The land forces, however, rendered not the slightest assistance; and a too cautious colonel posted the battery at such a point that no shot could reach the enemy without first passing through a hill. Accordingly, when Barney led his flotilla gallantly down to the attack, he found that the issue of the conflict rested upon the sailors alone. From the battery, which was expected to draw the enemy's fire, not a single effective shot was fired. The sailors fought nobly, using their heavy long twelves and eighteens with great effect. But they were sadly hampered by their position; for the mouth of the creek was so narrow that but eight barges could lie abreast, and the others coming down from above soon packed the little stream from shore to shore, giving the enemy a mark that the poorest gunner could hardly miss. Against the storm of grape and canister that the British poured upon them, the sailors had absolutely no protection. The barges were without bulwarks, and the blue-jackets at the guns and at the oars were exposed to the full force of the British fire. Yet in this exposed situation the gallant fellows kept up the fight for nearly an hour, only withdrawing when the last ray of hope for help from the shore battery had vanished. Shortly after the Americans abandoned the attack, the blockading squadron got under way and stood down the bay. From the way in which one of the frigates was working her pumps, the Americans saw that their fire had not been entirely without effect.

Barney's flotilla had now given the British so much trouble that they determined to destroy it without delay; and an expedition of more than five thousand men—composed of regulars, marines, and a few negroes—was carried up the Patuxent, and landed at Benedict, where an armed brig had been stationed to cover the disembarkation. It was early dawn when the signal to land was given, and the river was covered in an instant with a well-manned and warlike flotilla. It was hard work for the British sailors, for a strong current was running; but by three o'clock in the afternoon the whole army was landed, and encamped in a strong

position on a hill overlooking the village. Though no American troops were anywhere in the vicinity, the landing was conducted with the utmost caution. As the prow of each boat grated on the sand, the soldiers leaped on the beach, and instantly drew up in line, ready to repel any attack. After the infantry was landed, about a hundred artillerymen followed, and the same number of sailors dragging howitzers.

It is easily understood that this powerful force was not organized solely to destroy Barney's pitiful little flotilla. The real purpose of the British commander was to press on into the interior, and capture Washington, which the Americans had foolishly left without any defences whatever. It came to Barney's ears that Admiral Cockburn had boasted that he would destroy the American flotilla, and dine in Washington the following Sunday. This news the American commodore sent off to the authorities at the capital, and they then began to make futile preparations to repel the invader. In the mean time the British commenced their march up the shores of the Patuxent, meeting with no opposition. Barney, knowing that the defence of the national capital was of far greater importance than the fate of his flotilla, landed with four hundred men, and hastened to the American lines before Washington. He left the barges under the command of the second lieutenant, Mr. Frazier, with instructions to set fire to every boat on the appearance of the enemy, and then join the commodore with all the men left under his charge. Accordingly, when the invading column reached Nottingham, Mr. Frazier took the flotilla still higher up the creek,—a move that vastly disconcerted the British, who saw their prey eluding them. "But in the main object of our pursuit we were disappointed," wrote a British officer. "The flotilla which had been stationed opposite to Nottingham retired, on our approach, higher up the stream; and we were consequently in the situation of a huntsman who sees his hounds at fault, and has every reason to apprehend that his game will escape." But the game never fell into the hands of the ardent hunters; for the next day Mr. Frazier fulfilled his orders by setting fire to every barge, and, after seeing several of the larger boats blow up, mustered his men, and cut across the country, to join his superior officer.

The British naval forces soon after reached Pig Point, the scene of this destruction, and there remained; while the land forces immediately turned away from the river, and marched upon Washington.

It is not necessary to give in detail the incidents of the series of skirmishes by which the British fought their way to the American capital. They were opposed by raw militia, and the few sailors and marines under



SHARP-SHOOTERS.

Barney. The former fled with promptitude at the very first fire, but the sailors and marines fought gallantly. The fighting was sharpest at Bladensburg; and here Barney's blue-jackets won praise from everybody, even from the enemy whose advance they disputed. Barney himself led the Americans, and sighted a favorite gun of the sailors' battery, until he fell desperately wounded. This battery commanded the road by which the main column of British advanced; and by its hail of grape and canister it beat back the advancing regiments, and for some time checked their further progress. The British thereupon opened with rockets, and sent

out sharp-shooters to pick off the Yankee gunners. One of these riflemen was observed by the Americans to deliberately build for himself a small redoubt of stones from an old wall ; and, lying down behind it, he began a deliberate fire upon the Americans. His first bullet went through the cap of one of the sailors, and the second sent a poor fellow to his long account. The marines answered with their muskets ; but the fellow's stone rampart saved him, and he continued his fire. Barney vowed to put an end to that affair, and, carefully sighting one of his cannon, pulled the lanyard. The heavy round shot was seen to strike the sharp-shooter's defence, and stones and man disappeared in a cloud of dust. Meantime, the enemy had thrown out flanking parties under cover of the woods, and had nearly surrounded the little band of sailors. A musket-ball struck Barney in the thigh, and he began to grow faint with loss of blood ; and, finding that the militia had fled, and the sailors were becoming exhausted, the commodore ordered a retreat. The blue-jackets left the field in good order ; but their gallant commander had gone but a few steps, when the pain of his wound forced him to lie down under a tree, and await the coming of the enemy. The British soon came up, led by Gen. Ross and Capt. Wainwright of the navy. After learning Barney's rank, and courteously offering to secure surgical aid, the general turned to his companion, and, speaking of the stubborn resistance made by the battery, said, "I told you it was the flotilla men." — "Yes. You were right, though I could not believe you," was the response. "They have given us the only fighting we have had."

Meanwhile, the British, having routed the Americans at every point, pressed on to Washington. The inhabitants fled before them, and the town was almost deserted when the British marched in with banners flying and bands playing. The enemy held the city for only a day ; but in that time they did such deeds of vandalism, that even the people and the press of London cried out in indignation. The President's house, the Capitol, all the public buildings except the Patent Office, were burned to the ground. The navy-yard, with the uncompleted ships on the stocks, was likewise burned ; but in this the enemy only acted in accordance with the rules of

war. It was their destruction of the public buildings, the national archives, and the Congressional library, that aroused the wrathful indignation of all fair-minded people, whether Americans or Europeans. "Willingly," said



THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON.

one London newspaper, "would we throw a veil of oblivion over our transactions at Washington. The Cossacks spared Paris, but we spared not the capital of America." A second English journal fitly denounced the proceedings as "a return to the times of barbarism."

But, if the invaders are rightly to be blamed for the useless vandalism

they encouraged, the American authorities are still more culpable for their neglect of the most ordinary precautions of war. That a national capital, close to the sea, should be left virtually unprotected while the enemy was massing his forces only a few miles away, seems almost unbelievable. But so it was with Washington; for five hundred flotilla men were forced to bear the brunt of the attack of five thousand British. True it is that the military authorities had massed seven thousand militia-men for the defence of the city; but such was the trepidation of these untrained soldiers, that they fled before the main body of the British had come into the fight. That the sailors and marines fought bravely, we have the testimony of the British themselves. Mr. Gleig, a subaltern in the attacking army, writes, "Of the sailors, however, it would be injustice not to speak in the terms which their conduct merits. They were employed as gunners; and not only did they serve their guns with a quickness and precision which astonished their assailants, but they stood till some of them were actually bayonneted with fuses in their hands; nor was it till their leader was wounded and taken, and they saw themselves deserted on all sides by the soldiers, that they quitted the field." Therefore, in the battle of Bladensburg, the blue-jackets won nothing but honor, though the results of the battle were so mortifying to the national pride of the people of the United States.

On the 25th of August the British left the smoking ruins of Washington behind them, and made for their fleet lying in the Patuxent. They feared that the outraged nation would rise upon them, and turn their march into a bloody retreat, like that of the British soldiery from the historic field of Lexington. Accordingly their departure was by night, immediately after a furious storm of rain and wind. Strict orders were issued to all the Americans in Washington, warning them, under penalty of death, not to leave their houses until the sun rose the next morning. Then the British stealthily marched out of the town. "No man spoke above his breath," says subaltern Gleig. "Our very steps were planted lightly, and we cleared the town without exciting observation." A two days' march brought them to Benedict, where the fleet lay in waiting for their reception.



THE BURNING OF WASHINGTON.

In the mean time, a portion of the British fleet had ascended the Potomac as far as Alexandria, and, finding that town defenceless, proceeded to dictate to the inhabitants the terms upon which they could save their village from desolation. The British demanded that all naval stores and ordnance, all the shipping and its furniture, all merchandise, and all provisions in the town should be surrendered. Several vessels had been scuttled, to prevent their falling into the hands of the enemy; these, the British demanded, should be raised, repaired, and delivered to them. Time, however, did not permit the fulfilment of this condition; but to the others, harsh and humiliating though they were, the inhabitants were forced to accede. Heavy laden with the spoils of the village, the pillagers weighed anchor and started down the Potomac. But they were not destined to carry away their booty unmolested. News of the expedition reached Baltimore, and a large party of the sailors at the navy-yard were sent to the banks of the Potomac to cut off the enemy's retreat. They were officered by four men famous in American naval annals,—Perry, Rodgers, Porter, and Creighton. At Indian Head, just below Mount Vernon, the Potomac River narrows and flows swiftly between densely wooded bluffs. At this point the Americans threw up redoubts, and, mounting all the cannon that could be gathered on such short notice, prepared to dispute the enemy's passage. When the British fleet hove in sight, they were greeted with a storm of shot from the unsuspected batteries; and they recoiled in confusion. Practised American hunters lined the woody shores, and picked off the British sailors with musket-balls. For some time the fleet was thus checked in its progress. Finally the admiral determined that only by a bold dash could he escape; and accordingly, massing his vessels and concentrating his fire on the chief battery, he dashed past, and rejoined his superior officer, Cockburn, not without paying dearly for his exploit at Alexandria.

While the British were thus devastating the shores of Chesapeake Bay, they cast more than one longing look toward the thriving city of Baltimore, which, by its violent patriotism, had done much to urge on the war. From the ship-yards of Baltimore came more than one stout

naval vessel that had forced the enemy to haul down his colors. But that which more than any thing else aroused the hatred of the British was the share Baltimore took in fitting out and manning those swift privateers, concerning whose depredations upon British commerce we shall have something to say in a later chapter. "It is a doomed town," said Vice-admiral Warren. "The truculent inhabitants of Baltimore must be tamed with the weapons which shook the wooden turrets of Copen-



PLANNING THE ATTACK.

hagen," cried the editor of a great London paper. But, nevertheless, Baltimore did not fall before the invader, although for some time the army and navy of the enemy were united in the attempt to bring desolation upon the obnoxious city. After the fall of Washington, the depredations of the British along the shores of Chesapeake Bay redoubled, and the marauding expeditions thus employed were really feelers thrown out to test the

strength of the defenses of Baltimore. That the marauders found some opposition, is evident from a passage in the journal of a British officer. "But these hasty excursions, though generally successful, were not always performed without loss to the invaders." On one of these expeditions, Sir Peter Parker, captain of the frigate "Menelaus," lost his life. He had been ordered down to the mouth of the bay just after the fall of Washington. "I must first have a frolic with the Yankees," said he. And accordingly, after a jovial dinner aboard his frigate, he led a night expedition of sailors and marines ashore, expecting to surprise a small body of Maryland militia stationed at Moorfields. Sir Peter's frolic turned

out disastrously; for the Marylanders were on the watch, and received the invaders with a fierce volley. Sir Peter was gallantly cheering on his men, when a musket-ball cut the main artery in his thigh. "They have hit me, Pearce," he said faintly to his lieutenant; "but it's nothing. Push on, my brave boys, and follow me." But even thus cheering, he fell back, the words died away in his throat, and he bled to death before a surgeon could be found. It is but right to say, that, though he sailed in Cockburn's command, he had none of the cruel brutality which his admiral too often showed.

On the 12th of September a more serious assault was made upon Baltimore. The British naval and military forces united in the attack, which was made by land and sea. A force of nine thousand men, including two thousand marines and two thousand sailors, was landed fifteen miles from Baltimore, and under the command of Gen. Ross and Admiral Cockburn marched gayly inland, never doubting that they would find the Americans unprepared, and repeat their exploits at Washington. In this expectation they were sadly disappointed; for the Maryland militia, aided by a few regulars and seamen, outfought the British at every point, and checked their farther advance. Among the slain was Gen. Ross, who was shot down as he was leading the advance of the British skirmishers. In the mean time, the British fleet had been taking its share in the engagement by attempting to reduce Fort McHenry. A large flotilla of frigates, schooners, sloops, and bomb-ketches entered the Patapsco River on the morning of the 12th, and, casting anchor out of the reach of the fort's guns, opened a furious fire. The fort was manned by militiamen and a large detachment of the gallant sailors from Barney's flotilla. When the continual falling of shells within the fort told that the enemy had come within range, the guns of Fort McHenry opened in response. But, to the intense chagrin of the Americans, it was found that their works mounted not a single gun that would carry to the enemy's fleet. There then remained to the garrison only the trying duty of holding their post, and enduring without response a galling fire from the enemy. All the garrison stood to the guns without flinching; while the shrieking shells

fell on all sides, and, exploding, scattered deadly missiles in all directions. One shell struck and dismounted one of the twenty-four-pounders, killing and wounding several of its men. Admiral Cochrane, who commanded the attacking fleet, saw this incident, and ordered three of his bomb-vessels to move up nearer to the fort. This gave the Americans the opportunity for which they had been longing, and instantly every gun in the fort opened upon the three luckless ketches. Half an hour of this fire sufficed to drive the three vessels back to their original station.

Night fell, but brought no cessation of the bombardment. But the enemy, while never slackening his fire, had determined to take advantage of the darkness to send out a landing party to take two small batteries on the banks of the Patapsco, and then assault Fort McHenry from the rear. Twelve hundred and fifty men, with scaling-ladders and fascines, left the fleet in barges, and moved up the Patapsco towards Fort Covington and the City Battery. But their plan, though well laid, was defeated by the vigilance and courage of the garrisons of the two threatened positions,—sailors all, and many of them men from Barney's flotilla, a training-school which seems to have given to the region about Chesapeake Bay its most gallant defenders. Just as the storming party turned the prows of the barges towards the shore, they were discovered; and from McHenry, Covington, and the City Battery burst a thunderous artillery-fire, that shook the houses in Baltimore, and illumined the dark shores of the river with a lurid glare. Bold as the British sailors were, they could advance no farther under so terrible a fire. Two of the barges were shot to pieces, leaving their crews struggling in the water. A ceaseless hail of grape and canister spread death and wounds broadcast among the enemy; and, after wavering a moment, they turned and fled to their ships. Cochrane, seeing his plan for taking the American positions by assault thus frustrated, redoubled the fury of his fire; hoping that, when daybreak made visible the distant shore, nothing but a heap of ruins should mark the spot where Fort McHenry stood the night before.

A night bombardment is at once a beautiful and a terrible spectacle. The ceaseless flashing of the great guns, lighting up with a lurid glare



THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER.

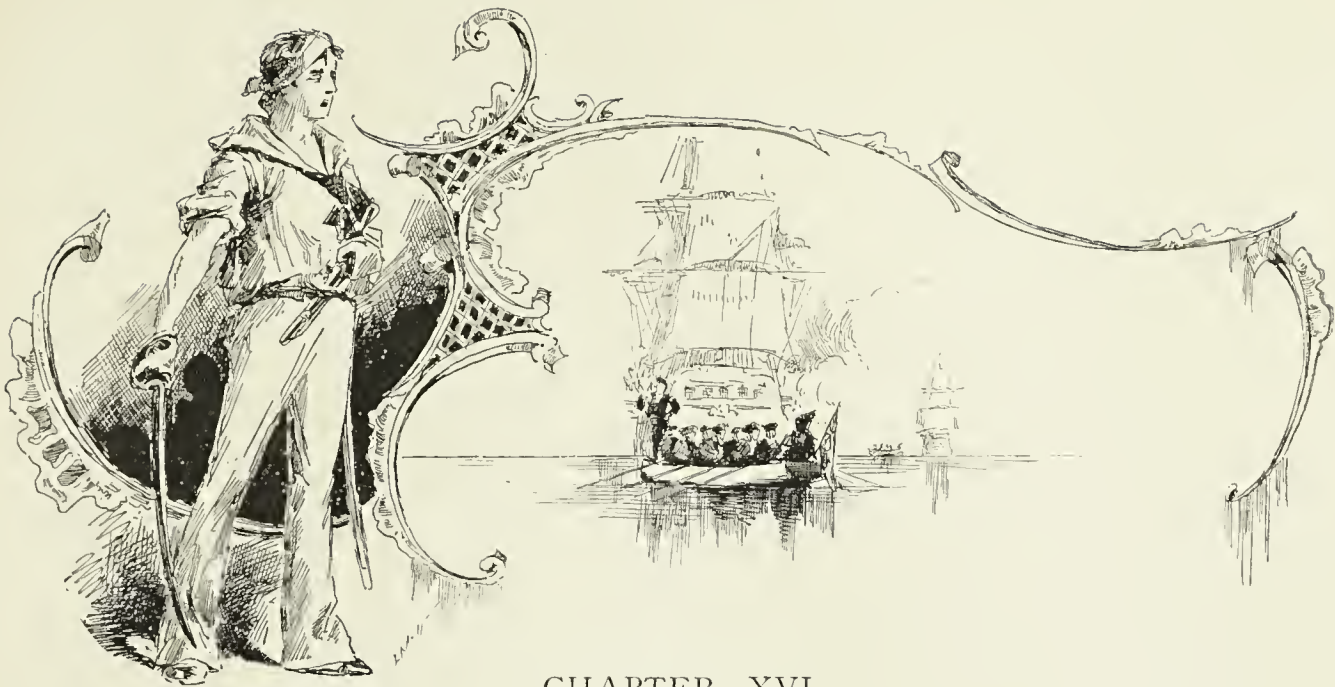
the dense clouds of smoke that hang over the scene of battle; the roar of the artillery; the shriek of the shell as it leaves the cannon's mouth, slowly dying into a murmur and a dull explosion, as, with a flash of fire, the missile explodes far away, — combine to form a picture, that, despite the horrors of wounds and death, rouses the enthusiasm and admiration of the beholder. When viewed from the deck of one of an attacking fleet, the scene is even more impressive. At each discharge of the great guns, the vessel reels and trembles like a huge animal in agony. The surging waters alongside reflect in their black depths the flash of the cannon and the fiery trail of the flying shell. Far in the distance can be seen the flashes of the enemy's guns, each of which may mean the despatch of a missile bringing death and pain in its track. One who has witnessed such a spectacle can readily understand the fascination which men find in the great game of war.

Pacing the deck of the one of the British vessels was a young American, whose temperament was such that he could fully appreciate all the beauties of the scene, even though harassed by anxious fears lest the British should be successful. This man was Francis S. Key, who had visited the fleet with a flag of truce, but was unable to get away before the bombardment began. When the sun set on the evening of the 13th, Key saw his country's flag waving proudly over the ramparts at which the British guns had been so furiously pounding. Would that flag still be there when the sun should rise again? That was the question which Key asked himself as he anxiously walked the deck throughout the night, striving to pierce the darkness, and make out, by the lurid lightnings of the cannon, whether the flag was still there. As the night wore on, Key took an old letter from his pocket, and on the blank sheet jotted down the lines of the immortal national song, "The Star Spangled Banner." Its words merely voice the writer's thoughts; for often during that night he looked anxiously shorewards, to see if

"the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof, through the night, that our flag was still there."

When the anxiously awaited daylight came, Fort McHenry still stood ; and over it waved defiantly the starry folds of the United States flag. The British saw that, by land and sea, their attack had failed ; and early in the morning the fleet, after taking on board the remnant of the land forces, sailed suddenly away, and left Baltimore safe. They had bombarded Fort McHenry for twenty-five hours, throwing nearly two thousand shells. Yet, wonderful as it may appear, only four of the Americans were killed, and twenty-four wounded. With this failure the British ended their chief offensive operations along the shores of the Chesapeake. The greater part of the fleet and the soldiery then moved southward, to take part in the operations along the Gulf coast, that culminated in the disastrous defeat of the invaders at New Orleans.





CHAPTER XVI.

DESULTORY HOSTILITIES ON THE OCEAN.—ATTACK UPON FORT BOWYER.—LAFITTE THE PIRATE.—BRITISH EXPEDITION AGAINST NEW ORLEANS.—BATTLE AT THE RIGOLETS.—ATTACK ON NEW ORLEANS, AND DEFEAT OF THE BRITISH.—WORK OF THE BLUE-JACKETS.—CAPTURE OF THE FRIGATE “PRESIDENT.”—THE “CONSTITUTION” TAKES THE “CYANE” AND “LEVANT.”—THE “HORNET” TAKES THE “PENGUIN.”—END OF THE WAR.

THE naval incidents of the latter part of 1814 conferred little honor upon either of the belligerents. Seldom did the meetings between hostile ships rise to the dignity of battles. One or two small American brigs fell a prey to British frigates; but in every instance the disparity of force was so great that the weaker surrendered without striking a blow. Such was the case with the sixteen-gun brig “Rattlesnake,” which escaped from one British frigate by throwing overboard all her guns, only to immediately fall a prey to the “Leander.” In July of the same year, the United States brig “Siren” was captured by the British frigate “Medway,” off the coast of Africa, after a long chase, during which the American hove overboard every thing movable on the brig. Not all these petty encounters ended so favorably for the enemy. Off New York a cutting-out party of volunteers surprised and captured the British tender “Eagle,” a small craft carrying one thirty-two-pound

howitzer, and fourteen men. Ten days later, the frigate "Tenedos," which had done such good service on the blockade, suffered the loss of her tender, which was gallantly carried away by the crew of a Yankee gunboat. Some very desperate combats between American privateers and British naval vessels were fought about this time, and will be duly noted in detail in the chapter treating of the exploits of the private armed navy.

As the autumn came on, the British naval forces began to rendezvous in the Gulf of Mexico, preparatory to the campaign before New Orleans. On Sept. 14, a squadron of four British sloops-of-war appeared off Mobile, and opened fire upon Fort Bowyer, which guarded the entrance to Mobile Bay. The attack was vigorous, and the defence determined. A British land expedition moved upon the fort from the landward side; and the little garrison found itself surrounded by enemies, many of whom were Indians, whose savage assistance the British had accepted from the very opening of the war. A small force, only, defended the fort. Percy, the British admiral, knew the weakness of the garrison; and, thinking of the ninety-two guns he could bring to bear against the twenty worked by the Americans, announced proudly, that he would give the garrison just twenty minutes to surrender. The twenty minutes passed quickly, and still the fort responded savagely to the fire of its assailants. The flag of the British ship "Hermes" was shot away; and soon after, a round shot cut her cable, and she drifted upon a sand-bank, and lay helpless, and exposed to a raking fire. Her captain, having set her afire, abandoned her; and she soon blew up. The other vessels kept up the attack gallantly for a time. The flag-staff of the fort was shot away; but the flag soon re-appeared, waving from a sponge-staff. The Americans then redoubled their fire, which soon told so severely upon the British ships that they were forced to withdraw. In the mean time, the assault of the Indians and troops had been checked, and the forces driven back in disorder, thus leaving the victory to the Americans.

It is not within the province of this work to treat of the military operations that led up to the battle of New Orleans. But the last months of 1814 witnessed a series of naval incidents trivial in themselves, but

deriving importance from their connection with Gen. Jackson's great victory. Over certain incidents in the preparations of the Americans for repelling the invasion hangs a shade of romance.

To the southward of the quaint, rambling, rose-covered city of New Orleans, the tawny flood of the Mississippi winds towards the gulf in huge serpentine curves. The shores between which it flows rise scarce higher than the surface of the river itself; and a slight increase in the volume of water, or a strong wind, will serve to turn the whole region into a great, watery marsh. From the mouth of the great river, the whole coast of Louisiana, extending north and west, is a grassy sea, a vast expanse of marsh-grass, broken here and there by inlets of the Mexican Gulf, and sluggish, winding bayous that lead up into the higher lands of the State,—water-ways that lead even to the back door of the Crescent City herself, but known only to oyster-gatherers, or in 1814 to the adventurous men who followed the banner of Lafitte the Baratarian pirate.

Pirate he was called then; but it is doubtful whether his misdeeds ever exceeded smuggling, or, at worst, privateering under the protecting flag of some belligerent nation. When all nations were warring, what was easier than for a few gallant fellows, with swift-sailing feluccas, to lurk about the shores of the gulf, and now under the Spanish flag, now under the French, or any colors which suited the case, sally out and capture the richly laden Indiamen that frequented those summer seas? And when a power known as the United States Government, that had its quarters more than a thousand miles from the country of the Creoles, passed an outrageous law known as the embargo, what was more natural than that the Baratarians, knowing the mysterious water-ways that led up to the Crescent City, should utilize their knowledge to take ships and cargoes in and out without the formality of a custom-house examination? Such were the times that led to the formation and growth of the "piratical" colony of Barataria. Its leaders and rulers were John and Pierre Lafitte; one of whom lived in New Orleans in the character of a prosperous merchant, while the other led the expeditions which brought in merchandise to stock the former's stores. Under the influence of the warlike

state of Europe, the trade of these worthies thrived, and their settlement at Grande Isle took on the appearance of a prosperous colony and naval station. Storehouses and dwellings stood close to the sea. The fertile face of the island was cut up into fruitful plantations and orange-groves. Breastworks, well dotted with the muzzles of cannon, commanded the approach by sea. More than once, from behind those ramparts, the Baratarians had proved that they could fight, and that they acknowledged the authority of no flag. The Creoles of New Orleans looked indulgently upon the conduct of the outlaws; but the few Americans in the city were highly incensed to see the authority of the United States thus set aside, and vowed that when the war was over the audacious adventurers should be crushed. However, the end came even sooner.

On the 3d of September, a British armed brig anchored near the buccaneers' retreat, and sent a flag of truce ashore. Lafitte, with great dignity, received the envoys in his tent, and assured them of his protection, though the whole village was up in arms clamoring for the death of the intruders. The British officer then announced that he had come to secure the aid of Lafitte and his followers in the campaign against New Orleans. He offered the pirate captain forgiveness for all piracies committed against the British flag, — whereat the chief smiled sardonically, — also thirty thousand dollars in cash, a captain's commission in the British navy, and lands for himself and his followers. It was a tempting bribe; for at that moment Lafitte's brother lay in the *calabozo* at New Orleans awaiting trial for piracy, and the Americans were preparing rapidly for a descent upon the Baratarian stronghold. But, little as he liked the American flag, Lafitte liked the British still less: so, asking the Englishman to wait a few days for his answer, he sent a report of the occurrence to the New Orleans authorities, and offered to co-operate with the Americans, if he could be assured of pardon for all offences committed against the government. This document caused some hesitation at New Orleans; but the military authorities determined to refuse the offer, and break up the outlaws' nest. Accordingly, a few days later, the war schooner "Carolina," six gun-boats, a tender, and a launch, dropped down the Mississippi, and, rounding into the deep blue

waters of the gulf, headed for Barataria. Lafitte had too many friends in New Orleans not to know of the force thus sent against him; and, when the Americans reached Grande Terre, they found the pirates at their batteries, and the Baratarian flotilla drawn up in order of battle. The contest was sharp, but ended in the rout of the Baratarians. Their village was burned, their fortifications razed; and, when the triumphant Americans returned to New Orleans, they brought in their train ten armed prizes and a number of prisoners, although Lafitte was not to be found among the latter. Thereafter, the Baratarians, as an organization, vanished from history. Lafitte was afterwards occasionally heard of as a desperado on the more western shores of the Mexican Gulf; and it is further noticeable, that two guns were served by Baratarians under their old lieutenant, Dominique Yon, on that bloody day when Packenham's forces were beaten back on the field of Chalmette.

Early in December the movement of the British upon New Orleans took definite shape. On the 8th of that month, the calm waters of the Gulf of Mexico, off the Chandeleur Islands, were the scene of a grand rendezvous of British naval and military forces. All the vessels of Cockburn's Chesapeake fleet were there, with other men-of-war, transports, and schooners, to the number of fifty vessels. At the head was the towering two-decker "Tonnant," carrying the Admiral's flag. Frigates, corvettes, and sloops-of-war came trooping in the rear; and the transports bore seven thousand men for the capture of the Southern city. The British were in high good-humor as the anchors were let fall and the ships swung round with their heads to the tide. The voyage across the gulf from the rendezvous at Jamaica had been like a holiday trip. The weather had been fine, and the sea smooth; and the soft air of that semi-tropical region was a never-ending source of delight to sailors who had been suffering the hardships of a Northern station.

The point at which the British fleet had come to anchor lay about fifty miles due east of New Orleans. In that day of sailing-vessels, no enemy could breast the waters of the rolling Mississippi and crush the resistance of the city's defenders, as did Farragut in 1862. Knowing

that they could not hope to take their ships up to the levee of the city, the enemy determined to cast anchor near the entrance of Lake Borgne, and send through a chain of lakes and bayous a mammoth expedition in barges, to a point within ten miles of the city. But this well-laid plan had been betrayed to the Americans by Lafitte; and a little band of American sailors, under the command of Lieut. Catesby Jones, had taken up a position at the Rigolets, and were prepared to dispute the farther progress of the invading forces. Five gunboats, and one hundred and eighty-five men, constituted the American force, which for a time held the British in check. Finally, the enemy, finding that the swift American cutters could easily evade the lumbering war-vessels, fitted out a fleet of forty-five barges, manned by a thousand veteran British sea-dogs, who had seen service in half a dozen naval wars. The Americans had news of the contemplated attack, and made skilful preparations to meet it. The gunboats were moored in a fore and aft line, at a point near the Rigolets. Their broadsides bore upon the enemy, and the shallowness of the water was such that by no means could they be surrounded. The sailors were prepared for a desperate conflict, and spent the night before the battle in tricing up the boarding-nettings, sharpening cutlasses, and getting small-arms in good trim. In the morning the British came on to the attack. It was a long pull from the fleet to the place of battle: so their commander brought his flotilla to anchor just out of range of the American guns; and there the grim old veterans devoured their dinners, and took their rations of grog, with appetites undisturbed by the thought of the coming conflict. Dinner over, the enemy weighed anchor, and dashed forward, with long, swift strokes, into the very flashes of the Americans' cannon. The Americans knew that their one chance of victory was to keep the overwhelming forces of their foe out of boarding distance, and they worked their guns with a rapidity born of desperation. Musket-bullets, grape-shot, and canister poured in a murderous fire upon the advancing boats. But the sturdy old British veterans knew that the best way to stop that fire was to get at the base of it; and they pressed on undauntedly, responding vigorously, meanwhile, with their bow guns. Soon they were up to

the gunwales of the American flotilla, and the grappling-irons were fixed ; then, with sharp blows of cutlasses, deadly play of the pikes, and a ceaseless rattle of small-arms, they poured upon the decks of the Americans. The boarding-nettings could not long check so furious a foe, and fell before the fierce slash of the cutlasses. The decks once gained, the overpowering numbers of the Englishmen crushed all further resistance ; and the flotilla was finally taken, after about one hundred of the enemy and fifty Americans had fallen.

The American flotilla being thus shattered, there remained no further obstacle to prevent the landing of the invading army. Of the advance of that brilliant body of veteran troops over sands and marshes, and through sluggish bayous and canals half-full of stagnant water, until they emerged on the bank of the river, nine miles below New Orleans, it is not my purpose to speak further. Nor does an account of Gen. Jackson's vigorous measures of defence and glorious victory come within the province of this narrative. The interesting story of Jackson's creation of an army from leather-shirted Kentucky riflemen, gay Creoles from the Creole Quarter of the Crescent City, swarthy Spaniards and mulattoes, nondescript desperadoes from the old band of Lafitte, and militia and regulars from all the Southern States, forms no part of the naval annals of the war. It is enough to say that the flower of the British army, led by a veteran of the Peninsula, recoiled before that motley crew of untrained soldiers, and were beaten back, leaving their gallant leader and thousands of their brave men dead upon the field. The navy was not without some share in this glorious triumph. On the 23d of December the schooner "Carolina" dropped down from New Orleans, and opened fire upon the enemy. "Now, then, for the honor of America, give it to them!" sung out her commander, as the first broadside was fired. The attack, unexpected as it was, created a panic in the British camp. A feeble reply was made with rockets and musketry ; but even this was soon discontinued, and the enemy took refuge under the steep bank of the levee, whither the plunging shot could not follow them. All night the "Carolina" kept up her fire ; and, when at daybreak she moved away, she left the camp of

the enemy in confusion. During the day she renewed the attack, and persisted in her fire until the British threw up a heavy battery on the river's bank, and replied. The lads of the "Carolina" promptly accepted the challenge thus offered, and for a time a spirited combat was maintained. But the battery threw red-hot shot, and the schooner was soon set on fire and destroyed. Meanwhile the corvette "Louisiana" had come down to the scene of action, and in the subsequent engagements did some effective work. When the final onslaught of the British was made, on Jan. 7, 1815, the guns of the "Louisiana" were mounted on the opposite bank of the river, and the practised sailors worked them with deadly effect, until the flight of the American militia on that side exposed the battery to certain capture. The sailors then spiked their guns, and marched off unmolested. The sailors of the "Carolina," on that day of desperate fighting, were in the centre of Jackson's line, between the Creoles and the swarthy Baratarians under Dominique Yon. Here they worked their howitzers, and watched the scarlet lines of the enemy advance and melt away before that deadly blaze; advance and fall back again in hopeless rout. And among the many classes of fighting men whom Jackson had rallied before that British line, none did battle more valiantly for the honor of the nation and the safety of the flowery city of New Orleans than did those blue-jackets ashore.

It is a fitting commentary upon the folly of war, that the battle of New Orleans was fought after the two warring nations had signed a treaty of peace. The lives of some hundreds of brave Englishmen and Americans were needlessly sacrificed in a cause already decided. Far across the Atlantic Ocean, in the quaint old Dutch city of Ghent, representatives of England and the United States met, and, after some debate, signed the treaty on the 24th of December, 1814. But there was then no Atlantic cable, no "ocean greyhounds" to annihilate space and time; and it was months before the news of the treaty reached the scene of war. In the mean time, the hostilities were continued by land and sea.

The year 1815 found the American navy largely increased by new vessels, though the vigilance of the British blockaders kept most of these

close in port. The "Constitution" was at sea, having run the blockade at Boston. In New York Harbor were the "President," "Peacock," "Hornet," and "Tom Bowline," awaiting a chance to slip out for a cruise to the East Indies. It was decided that the vessels should run out singly, and the "President" was selected to make the first attempt. The night of the 14th of January was dark and foggy, and the blockading fleet was nowhere to be seen. Then, if ever, was the time for escape; and the Yankee tars weighed anchor and started out through the Narrows. In the impenetrable darkness of the night, baffled by head-winds and perplexing currents, the pilots lost their reckoning, and the orders to the man at the wheel were quick and nervous, until an ominous grating of the ship's keel, followed by the loss of headway, told that the frigate was aground. For a time the ship lay helpless, straining all her timbers as each wave lifted her slightly, and then let the heavy hull fall back upon the shoal. By ten o'clock the rising tide floated her off; but, on examination, Capt. Decatur found that she was seriously injured. To return to port was impossible with the wind then blowing: so all sail was crowded on, in the hopes of getting safely away before the blockading squadron should catch sight of the ship. As luck would have it, the blockaders had been forced from their posts by the gale of the day before, and the "President" had laid her course so as to infallibly fall into their clutches. Before daylight the lookout reported two sail in sight, and at daybreak the ship was fairly surrounded by the enemy's vessels. All at once gave chase to the luckless American; and a few hours were enough to show that her sailing qualities were so seriously injured by her pounding on the bar, that the enemy was rapidly overhauling her. Decatur adopted every known expedient to increase his ship's speed, but to no avail. After she had been lightened by starting the water, cutting away boats and anchors, chopping up and heaving overboard the ponderous cables, together with spars and provisions, the enemy still gained; and the foremost pursuer, a razee, opened fire. The "President" responded with her stern-chasers, but her shot had no effect. "It is said that on this occasion," writes Cooper, "the shot of the

American ship were observed to be thrown with a momentum so unusually small, as to have since excited much distrust of the quality of her gunpowder. It is even added, that many of these shot were distinctly seen, when clear of the smoke, until they struck." At six o'clock in the evening, the frigate "Endymion" led the British squadron in chase, and had gained a position so close upon the American's beam that her broadsides were rapidly crippling the fugitive. Thereupon Decatur determined upon a desperate expedient, that sounds like some of his reckless exploits in the war with Tripoli. His plan was to bring the "President" about, and run boldly alongside the enemy. Every thing was to be sacrificed to the end of getting to close quarters. When once the two ships had grappled, the Americans were to board, carry the British ship in a hand-to-hand battle, and then, abandoning the crippled "President," escape in the captured frigate. So desperate a plan needed the cordial co-operation of every man: so it was first presented to the commissioned officers, who gladly embraced the desperate project. The sailors were then sent aft, and Decatur addressed them from the quarter-deck.

"My lads," said he, "that ship is coming up with us. As our ship won't sail, we'll go on board of theirs, every man and boy of us, and carry her into New York. All I ask of you is to follow me. This is a favorite ship of the country. If we allow her to be taken, we shall be deserted by our wives and sweethearts. What, let such a ship as this go for nothing! 'Twould break the heart of every pretty girl in New York."

With hearty cheers, the jackies returned to their guns. All were ready for the coming struggle. Over the main hatch was mounted a howitzer, with its black muzzle peering down into the hold, ready to scuttle the ship when the boarders should spring upon the enemy's deck. The sun, by this time, had sunk below the horizon, and the darkness of night was gathering over the ocean. The two ships surged toward each other,—great black masses, lighted up on either side by rows of open ports, through which gleamed the uncertain light of the battle-lanterns. On the gun-deck the men stood stern and silent; their thoughts fixed



PRESIDENT AND ENDYMION.

upon the coming battle, or perhaps wandering back to the green fields and pleasant homes they had so recently left, perhaps forever. The gray old yeoman of the frigate, with his mates, walked from gun to gun, silently placing a well-sharpened cutlass, a dirk, and a heavy leather boarding-cap at each man's side. The marines were drawn up in a line amidships; their erect, soldierly air and rigid alignment contrasting with the careless slouchiness of the sailors. Butts for the sailors' ridicule as they were during a cruise, the marines knew that, in hand-to-hand conflicts, their part was as dashing as that of their tormentors of the fore-castle.

When the "President" had come within a quarter of a mile of her adversary, Decatur perceived that his enemy was determined to decide the contest at long range. As the "President" hauled down nearer, the "Endymion" sheered off, keeping up meanwhile a vigorous cannonade. To this the Americans responded in kind; and so much superior was the gunnery of the Yankee tars, that the rigging of the enemy was seen to be fast going to pieces, while her guns were being silenced one by one. But her fire did sad havoc among the men of the "President," and particularly among the officers. The first broadside carried away Decatur's first lieutenant, Mr. Babbitt, who was struck by a thirty-two-pound shot, which cut off his right leg below the knee, and hurled him through the wardroom hatch to the deck below, fracturing his wounded leg in two places. Shortly after, Decatur was knocked to the deck by a heavy splinter. For some time he lay unconscious; then opening his eyes, and seeing a throng of anxious seamen about him, he ordered them to their stations, and resumed his duties. The fire of the "Endymion" then slackened; and she lay upon the water, with her sails cut from the yards. At that moment Lieut. Howell turned to a midshipman standing at his side, and said gayly, "Well, we have whipped that ship, at any rate." A flash from the bow of the Englishman followed; and he added, "No: there she is again." The midshipman turned to reply, and saw Howell stretched dead at his feet, killed by the last shot of the battle.

The enemy was now helpless, and it would have been easy enough for the "President" to choose her position and compel her adversary to strike; but the presence of two more Englishmen, rapidly coming up astern, forced the Americans to abandon their prey and continue their flight. It was then late in the evening, and the night was dark and starless. Every light was extinguished on the American frigate, in the hope that by so doing she might slip away under cover of the night. But the British lookouts were sharp-eyed; and by eleven o'clock two frigates had closed in on the



THE "PRESIDENT" TRIES TO ESCAPE.

crippled ship, and a third was rapidly coming up astern. All were pouring in rapid broadsides, and the dark waters were lighted up like a fiery sea by the ceaseless flashing of the guns. Thus surrounded and overpowered, there remained open to the Americans no course but to surrender; and at eleven o'clock at night the "President" made signal that she had struck. Her fate, like that of the "Chesapeake," had accorded with the superstitious sailors' notion that she was an unlucky ship. In the long running fight, neither the Americans nor the British had escaped without severe loss. On the "President" were twenty-four killed and fifty-six

wounded; the first, second, and third lieutenants being among the slain. The "Endymion" had eleven men killed and fourteen wounded. The two frigates were ordered to proceed to Bermuda; but the "President's" bad luck seemed to follow her, for on the way she encountered a terrific gale, by which her masts were carried away, and her timbers so strained that all the upper-deck guns had to be thrown overboard to save the ship.

The loss of the "President," at the very mouth of the New York Harbor, was certainly a most inauspicious opening for the naval operations of 1815. The people of New York and Philadelphia, to whom had come neither the news of peace nor of the glorious success of the American arms at New Orleans, were plunged into despondency. "Now that Great Britain is at peace with Europe," thought they, "she can exert all her power in the task of subjugating America;" and mournful visions of a return to British rule darkened their horizon. But, even while they were thus saddened by Decatur's defeat, a gallant vessel—the monarch of the American navy—was fighting a good fight for the honor of the nation; and out of that fight she came with colors flying and two captive men-of-war following in her wake.

It will be remembered that the "Constitution" left Boston in December, 1814, for an extended cruise. The gallant frigate, always a favorite among man-o'-war's men, carried with her on this cruise a full crew of native Americans,—thorough seamen, and as plucky fighters as ever pulled a lanyard or carried a cutlass. Her course lay due east; and in January, 1815, she was in the Bay of Biscay, where she fell in with, and captured, two prizes. After this she cruised about for a month, without encountering an enemy. American privateers and cruisers had fairly driven British merchantmen from the seas, and the tars of the "Constitution" found their time hanging heavily on their hands. The captain was an able and considerate officer, and much freedom was allowed the jackies in their amusements. With boxing, broadsword, and single-stick play, drill and skylarking, the hours of daylight were whiled away; and by night the men off duty would gather about the forecastle lantern to play with greasy, well-thumbed cards, or warble tender ditties to black-eyed Susans far across

the Atlantic. Patriotic melodies formed no small part of Jack's musical *repertoire*. Of these, this one, written by a landsman, was for a long time popular among the tuneful souls of the forecandle, and was not altogether unknown in the wardroom.

“Now coil up y'r nonsense 'bout England's great navy,
And take in y'r slack about oak-hearted tars;
For frigates as stout, and as gallant crews have we,
Or how came their “Macedon” decked with our stars?
Yes, how came her “Guerriere,” her “Peacock,” and “Java,”
All sent broken-ribbed to old Davy of late?
How came it? Why, split me, than Britons we're braver;
And that they shall feel, too, whenever we meet.
Then charge the can cheerily,
Send it round merrily:
Here's to our country, and captains commanding;
To all who inherit
Of Lawrence the spirit
Disdaining to strike while a stick is left standing.”

Many were the verses of this notable production; for, to be popular in the forecandle, a song must play a lengthy part in “teasing time.” One verse, however, is enough to show the manly, if perhaps unreasoning, pride the blue-jackets took in the triumphs of the navy.

But the time of the sailors on this closing cruise of the war was not destined to be spent in sport and singing alone. The noble frigate was not to return to the stagnation of a season of peace in port, without adding yet another honor to her already honorable record. On the morning of the 20th of February, as the ship was running aimlessly before a light wind, some inexplicable impulse led Capt. Stewart to suddenly alter his course and run off some sixty miles to the south-west. Again the “Constitution's” good luck seemed to justify the sailors' belief, for at noon she ran into a group of vessels. The first vessel was sighted on the larboard bow, and, as the frigate overhauled her, proved to be a full-rigged ship. Soon after a second sail, also a ship, was sighted; and a few

minutes more sufficed to show that both were men-of-war. The one first sighted was the frigate-built corvette "Cyane," of thirty-four guns; and the second was the sloop-of-war "Levant," of twenty-one guns. For either of these vessels singly, the "Constitution," with her fifty-two guns and crew of four hundred and fifty men, was more than a match. Yet to attack the two was a bold movement, and this Stewart determined to undertake. Hardly had the character of the strangers been made out, when the corvette was seen making signals to the sloop; and the two vessels, then about ten miles apart, made all sail to get together before the enemy should overhaul them. This juncture was precisely what Stewart wished to prevent; and in a trice the shrill notes of the boatswain's whistle sent the sailors in swarms into the rigging, and the frigate was as if by magic clothed with a broad expanse of canvas. Quickly she felt the effect, and bounded through the water after the distant ships like a dolphin chasing a school of flying-fish. The old tars on the forecastle looked knowingly over the side at the foamy water rushing past, and then cast approving glances aloft where every sail was drawing. But their complacency was shattered by a loud crash aloft, which proved to be the main royal-mast which had given way under the strain. Another spar was rigged speedily, and shipped by the active tars, and soon the snowy clouds aloft showed no signs of the wreck. At sundown the three vessels were so near each other that their colors could be seen. Stewart ran up the stars and stripes, to which the strangers responded by setting the British flag at their mastheads.

The purpose of the enemy was to delay the opening of the action until night should give him opportunity to manœuvre unobserved; but the "Constitution," suspecting this, pressed forward hotly, and opened fire a few minutes after six o'clock. By skilful seamanship Stewart kept the windward gage of both enemies; and the fight opened with the "Cyane" on the port-quarter, and the "Levant" on the port-bow of the American frigate. Fifteen minutes of fierce cannonading followed, the combatants being within musket-shot most of the time. Every gun was engaged; and the heavy broadsides shook the ships, and thundered far over the placid surface of the ocean, which was now faintly illumined

by the rising moon. The triangular space between the ships was filled with the dense sulphurous smoke of the burning powder; so that the gunners could see nothing of the enemy at whom they were hurling their ponderous iron bolts. The men in the tops could now and again catch a glimpse of the top hamper of the enemy's ships, but those on the gun-deck were working almost at random. After a few minutes of rapid firing, the fire of the enemy slackened; and Stewart directed his gunners to cease until the smoke should have cleared away. At this command a silence, almost oppressive after the heavy cannonading, ensued, broken only by the occasional report of a gun from the unseen enemy, sounding like minute-guns of distress. Anxiously Stewart waited for the smoke to blow away. When it did so, the "Cyane" was seen luffing up, to come under the frigate's stern, and get in a raking broadside. The movement was discovered just in time to be checked. Stewart gave a heavy broadside to the "Levant;" then, bracing back his topsails, backed his ship down abreast of the "Cyane," pouring in rapid broadsides, before which the fire of the corvette died away. Two raking broadsides that crashed into the stern of the "Levant" sent that craft out of the action, to refit. The frigate then pressed down upon the "Cyane," and with a few heavy broadsides forced her to strike.

Capt. Douglass of the "Levant" then proved his bravery by standing by his captured consort; although he could have escaped easily, while the "Constitution" was taking possession of her prize. No thought of flight seems to have occurred to the gallant Briton, though he must have known that there was but little hope of his coming out of the combat victorious. Still he gallantly came back into the fight, meeting the "Constitution" ploughing along on the opposite tack. Broadside were exchanged at such close range that the Yankee gunners could hear the ripping of the planks on the enemy's decks as the solid shot crashed through beam and stanchion. Having passed each other, the ships wore, and returned to the attack; but the weight of the American's metal told so severely upon the "Levant" that her flag was hauled down, and, firing a gun to leeward, she gave up the fight.

As an exhibition of seamanship, this action is unrivalled in naval annals. For Stewart to have taken his ship into action with two hostile vessels, and so handle her as not only to escape being raked, but actually rake his enemies, was a triumph of nautical skill. The action was hard fought by both parties. The loss upon the British vessels has never been exactly determined; but it was undoubtedly large, for the hulls were badly cut up by the American's fire. The "Constitution" had but three men killed, and twelve wounded. The officers all escaped unhurt.

After a few hours' pause to repair damages, Stewart took his prizes into Porto Praya in the Cape Verde Islands, where they arrived on the 10th of March. The day after the ships reached port, a heavy fog settled over the water, cutting off vision in all directions. As the first lieutenant of the "Constitution" was walking the quarter-deck, he heard a young midshipman among the prisoners suddenly exclaim, "There's a large ship in the offing." The lieutenant peered about on every side, but could see nothing, until, looking upward, he saw the top-gallant sails of a large ship moving along above the fog-bank. Capt. Stewart was quickly notified; and, coolly remarking that the stranger was probably a British frigate, he ordered that the men be sent to quarters, and the ship prepared for action. The lieutenant hastened on deck to execute the orders, but had hardly reached his station when he saw the sails of two more ships gliding along above the fog-bank. Hastily he returned to the captain's cabin with the report. Stewart showed no emotion or alarm, although he knew well that the fact that he was in a neutral port would be no protection against the British, should they once discover his presence. The affair of the "Essex" was still fresh in his mind. Calmly he ordered the lieutenant to make sail and take the ship to sea, signalling to the two prizes to follow. The orders were given quietly on deck; and in fifteen minutes the "Constitution," under full press of sail, was making her way out of Porto Praya roads. On the shore were more than a hundred prisoners whom Stewart had landed under parole. Regardless of the dictates of honor, these men rushed to a Portuguese battery, and opened fire on the ships as they passed out. Hearing the cannonade,

the lookouts on the enemy's vessels looked eagerly for its cause, and caught sight, above the fog, of the rapidly receding topsails of the fugitives. At this sight the British set out in pursuit; and the fog soon clearing away revealed to the Americans two ships-of-the-line and a frigate following fast in their wake. The "Constitution" and the "Cyane" easily kept out of reach of their pursuers; but the "Levant" dropped behind, and finally, at a signal from Stewart, tacked, and stood back for Porto Praya. The enemy then abandoned the pursuit of the two foremost vessels, and followed the "Levant," but failed to overhaul her before she entered the harbor. This, however, checked the British not a whit. For the laws of nations and the authority of the Portuguese flag that floated over the little town, they cared nothing. On they came, and opened fire on the "Levant," which had dropped anchor under what was supposed to be a neutral battery. The Americans soon discovered their error. Not only did the British disregard the neutrality of the port, but the paroled prisoners on shore took possession of the battery, and opened fire upon the beleaguered craft. Thus caught between two fires, no hope remained to the Americans; and, after a few minutes' gallant but useless defence, the flag of the "Levant" was hauled down, and she passed again into the hands of the British.

It was late in May before the "Constitution" reached New York. Peace had then been declared; but none the less were Stewart and his men feasted and honored. The old frigate had won for herself a name ever to be remembered by the people of the nation, in whose service she had received and dealt so many hard knocks. "Old Ironsides," they called her; and even to-day, when a later war has given to the navy vessels whose sides are literally iron, the "Constitution" still holds her place in the hearts of the American people, who think of her lovingly by the well-won title of "Old Ironsides."

While we have been following thus Stewart and his gallant frigate in their final cruise, some smaller vessels were doing good work for the credit of the American flag. It will be remembered, that, when the "President" left New York Bay on her short and disastrous cruise of

January, 1815, she left behind her, at anchor, the "Peacock," the "Hornet," and the "Tom Bowline. These vessels, knowing nothing of the fate of their former consort, awaited only the coming of a gale sufficient to drive away the blockading squadron. On the 22d of January it came up to blow; and the three craft, under storm canvas, scudded over the bar, and made for the rendezvous at Tristan d'Acunha. On the way thither they separated, the "Hornet" cruising alone. On the 23d she sighted a strange sail on the horizon, and, clapping on all sail, bore down upon her. At the same time the stranger sighted the "Hornet," and made for her, evidently with hostile intent. The two vessels approached each other until within musket-shot, when the stranger hoisted English colors, and fired a gun. Capt. Biddle of the American ship was ready for the fray, and opened fire with a broadside. The response of the enemy was vigorous and effective. For fifteen minutes the firing was constant; but the enemy, seeing that the Americans were getting the better of the fight, then strove to close and board. This Biddle determined to avoid, but called up the boarders to beat back the enemy, should they succeed in closing. "At the instant," he writes, in his official report, "every officer and man repaired to the quarter-deck, when the two vessels were coming in contact, and eagerly pressed me to permit them to board the enemy; but this I would not permit, as it was evident, from the commencement of the action, that our fire was greatly superior, both in quickness and effect. The enemy's bowsprit came between our main and mizzen rigging, on our starboard side, affording him an opportunity to board us, if such was his design; but no attempt was made. There was a considerable swell on; and, as the sea lifted us ahead, the enemy's bowsprit carried away our mizzen-shrouds, stern davits, and spanker-boom, and he hung upon our larboard quarter. At this moment an officer called out that they had surrendered. I directed the marines and musketry men to cease firing; and while on the taffrail, asking if they had surrendered, I received a wound in the neck."

This wound, to which the captain so casually alludes, merits more than a passing reference. The fire of both ships had ceased when Biddle stepped upon the taffrail; but he had stood there only a moment, when

two or three of the officers on the quarter-deck cried out that a man on the Englishman was aiming at him. Biddle did not hear the caution; but two American marines saw the enemy's movement, and, quickly bringing up their muskets, sent two balls crashing into the brain of the English marksman. He fell back dead, but had fired his piece before falling. The bullet struck Biddle in the neck, inflicting a painful, but not serious, wound. The blood flowed freely, however; and two sailors, rushing up, were about to carry their commander to the cock-pit, when he stopped them. Determined to do something to stanch the flowing blood, a sailor tore his shirt into bandages, with which he bound up his captain's wound. But let us return to Biddle's narrative.

"The enemy just then got clear of us; and his foremast and bowsprit being both gone, and perceiving us wearing to give him a fresh broadside, he again called out that he had surrendered. It was with difficulty that I could restrain my crew from firing into him again, as he had certainly fired into us after having surrendered. From the firing of the first gun, to the last time the enemy cried out that he had surrendered, was exactly twenty-two minutes by the watch. She proved to be His Britannic Majesty's brig "Penguin," mounting sixteen thirty-two-pound carronades, two long twelves, a twelve-pound carronade on the top-gallant forecastle, with a swivel on the capstan in the tops."

On boarding the prize, Biddle found that she had suffered too severely from the American fire to ever be of service again. He accordingly removed the prisoners and wounded to his own ship, and scuttled the "Penguin." Hardly was this operation accomplished, when two sail were sighted, bearing rapidly down upon the scene of action. Nothing daunted, the lads of the "Hornet" went to their guns, but were heartily glad to find that the two vessels approaching were the "Peacock" and "Tom Bowline." On their arrival, the latter vessel was converted into a cartel, and sent into Rio de Janeiro with prisoners; while the "Hornet" and "Peacock" cruised on toward the Indian Seas. On April 28 a heavy line-of-battle ship was sighted, and gave chase. In the flight the two sloops parted; the "Peacock" going off unmolested, while the "Hornet" fled, hotly pursued



FOUNDERED AT SEA.

by the enemy. For a time it seemed as if the little craft must fall a prey to her huge pursuer, which had come up within a mile, and was firing great shot at the scudding sloop-of-war. Overboard went cables, guns, spars, shot, every thing that would lighten the "Hornet." The sails were wet down, and every thing that would draw was set. By consummate skill Biddle at last succeeded in evading his pursuer; and on the 9th of June the "Hornet" entered New York Bay, without a boat or anchor, and with but one gun left. But she brought the report that the last naval battle of the war had ended in victory for the Americans.

Meanwhile the "Peacock" was returning from a cruise not altogether void of interest. On parting with the "Hornet," she had struck off to the southward, and in the Straits of Sundra, between Borneo and Sumatra, had fallen in with the East India Company's cruiser "Nautilus," of fourteen guns. Between these two vessels an unfortunate and silly rencounter followed. The captain of the "Nautilus" knew of the declaration of peace; and, as the "Peacock" bore down upon his vessel, he shouted through a speaking-trumpet that peace had been declared. To this Capt. Warrington of the "Peacock" paid no attention, considering it a mere ruse on the part of the enemy, and responded by simply ordering the British to haul down their flag. This the Englishman very properly refused to do, and gallantly prepared for the unequal combat. Two broadsides were then interchanged, by which the "Nautilus" was severely cut up, and eight of her crew killed. She then struck her colors. Capt. Warrington, on sending a boat aboard his adversary, found that the declaration of peace was no ruse, but a truthful statement of facts. His conduct had been almost criminally headstrong; and, though he was profuse in formal apologies, the wrong done could never be righted. The "Peacock" then continued her homeward voyage.

When this vessel reached port, the last of the cruisers had returned; and the war was over in fact, as it had long been over technically. It has become the fashion to say that it was a useless war, that served no purpose, because the treaty by which it was ended contained no reference to the hateful doctrine of the right of search, which, more than any

thing else, had brought on the conflict. Yet, though the conduct of the war had not led the British to formally renounce their claims in this respect, the exploits of the American navy had shown that the Yankee blue-jackets were prepared to, and would, forcibly resent any attempt on the part of the British to put those claims into practice. The British had entered upon the war gaily, never dreaming that the puny American navy would offer any serious resistance to Great Britain's domination upon the ocean. Yet now, looking back over the three years of the war, they saw an array of naval battles, in the majority of which the Americans had been victorious; and in all of which the brilliancy of American naval tactics, the skill of the officers, and the courage and discipline of the crews, put the younger combatants on a plane with the older and more famous naval service. Fenimore Cooper, in his "History of the Navy of the United States," thus sums up the results of this naval war: "The navy came out of this struggle with a vast increase of reputation. The brilliant style in which the ships had been carried into action, the steadiness and accuracy with which they had been handled, and the fatal accuracy of their fire on nearly every occasion had produced a new era in naval warfare. Most of the frigate actions had been as soon decided as circumstances would at all allow; and in no instance was it found necessary to keep up the fire of a sloop-of-war an hour, when singly engaged. Most of the combats of the latter, indeed, were decided in about half that time. The execution done in these short conflicts was often equal to that made by the largest vessels of Europe in general actions; and, in some of them, the slain and wounded comprised a very large proportion of their crews. . . . The ablest and bravest captains of the English fleet were ready to admit that a new power was about to appear upon the ocean, and that it was not improbable the battle for the mastery of the seas would have to be fought over again."





CHAPTER XVII.

PRIVATEERS AND PRISONS OF THE WAR.—THE "ROSSIE."—SALEM PRIVATEERS.—THE "GEN. ARMSTRONG" GIVES BATTLE TO A BRITISH SQUADRON, AND SAVES NEW ORLEANS.—NARRATIVE OF A BRITISH OFFICER.—THE "PRINCE DE NEUFCHATEL."—EXPERIENCES OF AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR.—THE END.

NO narrative of the naval exploits of the Americans in the second war with Great Britain can be complete without some account of the achievements of the fleets of privateers which for three years swept the seas, destroying a vast amount of the enemy's property; and, while accomplishing their end by enriching their owners, did, nevertheless, much incidental good to the American cause. Seldom has the business of privateering been so extensively carried on as in the War of 1812. For this the reason lay in the rich bait offered by the world-wide commerce of Great Britain, whose fleets whitened every known sea. Privateering must ever be a weapon wielded by the weaker

nation against the stronger. And Congress, in the very Act by which it declared war, authorized the President to issue letters of marque and reprisal to private armed vessels.

The declaration of war had hardly been made public, when the hundreds of ship-yards from Maine to Savannah resounded with the blows of hammers and the grating of saws, as the shipwrights worked, busily refitting old vessels, or building new ones, destined to cruise against the commerce of John Bull. All sorts of vessels were employed in this service. The Atlantic and Gulf Coasts fairly swarmed with small pilot-boats, mounting one long gun amidships, and carrying crews of twenty to forty men. These little craft made rapid sallies into the waters of the Gulf Stream, in search of British West Indiamen homeward bound. Other privateers were huge three-masters, carrying heavy batteries, and able to outsail any of the enemy's ships. On leaving port for a long cruise, these vessels would carry enormous crews, so that captured vessels might be manned and sent home. After a successful cruise, such a privateer returned to port seldom bringing more than one-fifth of the crew with which she had set out. But the favorite rig for a privateer was that of the top-sail schooner,—such a rig as 'the "Enterprise" carried during the war with France. The famous ship-yards of Baltimore turned out scores of clean-cut, clipper-built schooners, with long, low hulls and raking masts, which straightway took to the ocean on privateering cruises. The armament of these vessels generally consisted of six to ten carronades and one long pivot-gun, going by the pet name of "Long Tom," mounted amidships. The crew was usually a choice assortment of cut-throats and scafaring vagabonds of all classes,—ready enough to fight if plunder was to be gained, but equally ready to surrender if only honor was to be gained by fighting. Yet history records a few actions in which the privateersmen showed a steadiness and courage worthy of seamen of the regular service.

The limitations of this work do not permit a complete account of the work of the privateers during the war. Although an interesting subject, and one of historical importance, but a few pages can be devoted to it

here. Properly treated, it would fill a volume; and, indeed, one of the most noted privateersmen has left a narrative of the exploits of the principal privateers, which forms a very considerable tome. The fact that two hundred and fifty private armed cruisers under the American flag captured or destroyed over sixteen hundred British vessels will indicate the importance and extent of the subject. For us a mere sketch of the exploits of some of the principal privateers must suffice.

One of the first things to attract the attention of the reader, in the dingy files of some newspaper of 1812-15, is the grotesque names under which many of the privateers sailed. The grandiloquent style of the regular navy vanishes, and in its place we find homely names; such as "Jack's Favorite," "Lovely Lass," "Row-boat," "Saucy Jack," or "True-blooded Yankee." Some names are clearly political allusions, — as the "Orders in Council" and the "Fair Trade." The "Black Joke," the "Shark," and the "Anaconda" must have had a grim significance for the luckless merchantmen who fell a prey to the vessels bearing these names. "Bunker Hill" and "Divided we fall," though odd names to sail under, seemed to bring luck to the two vessels, which were very successful in their cruises. "United we stand" was a luckless craft, however, taking only one prize; while the achievements of the "Full-blooded Yankee" and the "Sine qua non" were equally limited. Of the "Poor Sailor," certainly little was to be expected; and it is with no surprise that we find she captured only one prize.

Among the most successful privateers was the "Rossie" of Baltimore, commanded by the Revolutionary veteran Capt. Barney, who left her, finally, to assume command of the American naval forces on Chesapeake Bay. She was a clipper-built schooner, carrying fourteen guns, and a crew of one hundred and twenty men. The destruction wrought by this one cruiser was enormous. In a ninety days' cruise she captured, sunk, or otherwise destroyed British property to the amount of a million and a half dollars, and took two hundred and seventeen prisoners. All this was not done without some hard fighting. One prize — His Britannic Majesty's packet-ship "Princess Amelia" — was armed with nine-pounders,

and made a gallant defence before surrendering. Several men were killed, and the "Rossie" suffered the loss of her first lieutenant. The prisoners taken by the "Rossie" were exchanged for Americans captured by the British. With the first body of prisoners thus exchanged, Barney sent a cool note to the British commander at New Brunswick, assuring him that before long a second batch of his captured countrymen should be sent in.

Several Northern seaports shared with Baltimore the business of fitting out and manning privateers. The hardy seamen of Maine and Massachusetts were ever ready for a profitable venture of this kind; and, as the continuation of the war caused the whale-fishery to languish, the sailors gladly took up the adventurous life of privateersmen. The profits of a successful cruise were enormous; and for days after the home-coming of a lucky privateer the little seaport into which she came rang with the boisterous shouts of the carousing sailors. "We still, in imagination, see our streets filled with privateersmen," writes a historian of Portsmouth, "in groups, with blue ribbons tied around their hats, inscribed in large letters, 'SUCCESS TO THE "FOX,"' or whatever vessel they were to sail in. And then another scene, of sailors paid off with so much money that they knew not what to do with it. It was one of these men that, in Market Square, put his arm around a cow, kissed her, and put a five-dollar bill in her mouth, for a good cud. Sometimes they might be seen, finely dressed, walking down the sunny streets, carrying parasols." One Portsmouth privateer came to grief in the West Indies, and was captured by a British vessel of heavier metal. In the hold of the privateer was a considerable sum of money in gold coin, the existence of which was known only to the captain and his body-servant, a bright negro. The British, on capturing the vessel, put a prize-crew on board, and, while taking the Yankee captain upon their own ship, left his negro servant on the prize. Watching his opportunity, the negro brought up the gold coin, and dropped it unobserved into a tub of greasy black slush with which he had been slushing down the masts. Some days later, the captured vessel reached the port to which she had been sent, and was tied up at

a wharf to await condemnation. The faithful servant lingered about the ship for a time, saying that he had no place to go. At last he was gruffly ordered to leave; but, before going, he astonished the mate by begging for the tub of slush, which he said might enable him to earn a few cents along the docks. The mate carelessly told him to take the stuff, and be off; which he promptly did, carrying away with him his tub of slush, with its concealed treasure. It is worthy of note, that this negro, far from home and from the owners of the money, paid it into a bank to the credit of the captain whom he had served.

Salem, Mass., was another great port for privateers to hail from. Not less than twenty-five of these predatory gentry fitted out at the quiet little seaside village; and, when the war was ended, few of the inhabitants were unable to tell some tale of personal adventures, cruising against the enemy. Indeed, Salem had the honor of receiving the first prize captured on the ocean after the declaration of war; for into the harbor came, on the 10th of June, 1812, the trim privateer schooner "Fame," followed close by two ships, from the halliards of which waved the British flag surmounted by the stars and stripes. Then the whole town turned out as one man to greet and cheer the captors; but, long before the war was ended, the appearance of a prize in the harbor aroused little excitement. One of the most successful of the rovers sailing from this port was the "Dolphin," whose record during the war shows a list of twenty-two captured vessels. Her faculty for making long cruises, and turning up in the most unexpected places, made her the dread of all British sea-captains. She was manned by a gallant set of lads, who had no fear of hard fighting; and many of her prizes were won at the cannon's mouth. In January, 1813, the "Dolphin" fell in with a British ship and brig cruising together off Cape St. Vincent. Though the enemy outnumbered the privateersmen, and carried heavier metal, yet the "Dolphin" went gallantly into the fight, and after a severe battle succeeded in taking both vessels. Great was the astonishment of the British at being thus snapped up by a Yankee privateer almost under the guns of the Rock of Gibraltar. The luckless Britons were carried to America as prisoners; but so kind was

the treatment they met with at the hands of the privateers, that on leaving the "Dolphin," at Boston, they published a card in which they said, "Should the fortune of war ever throw Capt. Stafford or any of his crew into the hands of the British, it is sincerely hoped he will meet with similar treatment."

Perhaps the foremost of all the fighting privateers was the "Gen. Armstrong" of New York; a schooner mounting eight long nines and one long twenty-four on a pivot. She had a crew of ninety men, and was commanded on her first cruise by Capt. Guy R. Champlin. This vessel was one of the first to get to sea, and had cruised for several months with fair success, when in March, 1813, she gave chase to a sail off the Surinam River on the coast of South America. The stranger seemed to evince no great desire to escape; and the privateer soon gained sufficiently to discover that the supposed merchantman was a British sloop-of-war, whose long row of open ports showed that she carried twenty-seven guns. Champlin and his men found this a more ugly customer than they had expected; but it was too late to retreat, and to surrender was out of the question: so, calling the people to the guns, Champlin took his ship into action with a steadiness that no old naval captain could have exceeded. "Close quarters and quick work," was the word passed along the gun-deck; and the "Armstrong" was brought alongside her antagonist at a distant of half pistol-shot. For nearly an hour the two vessels exchanged rapid broadsides; but, though the American gunners were the better marksmen, the heavy build of the sloop-of-war enabled her to stand against broadsides which would have cut the privateer to pieces. Capt. Champlin was hit in the shoulder early in the action, but kept his station until the fever of his wound forced him to retire to his cabin. However, he still continued to direct the course of the action; and, seeing that the tide of battle was surely going against him, he ordered the crew to get out the sweeps and pull away from the enemy, whose rigging was too badly cut up to enable her to give chase. This was quickly done; and the "Gen. Armstrong," though badly injured, and with her decks covered with dead and dying men, escaped, leaving her more powerful adversary to repair damages and



PRIVATEERSMEN AT HOME.

make the best of her way home. Capt. Champlin, on his arrival at New York, was the hero of the hour. For a privateer to have held out for an hour against a man-of-war, was thought a feat worthy of praise from all classes of men. The merchants of the city tendered the gallant captain a dinner, and the stockholders in his vessel presented him with a costly sword.

But the "Gen. Armstrong" was destined to fight yet another battle, which should far eclipse the glory of her first. A new captain was to win the laurels this time; for Capt. Champlin's wound had forced him to retire, and his place was filled by Capt. Samuel C. Reid. On the 26th of September, 1814, the privateer was lying at anchor in the roadstead of Fayal. Over the land that enclosed the snug harbor on three sides, waved the flag of Portugal, a neutral power, but unfortunately one of insufficient strength to enforce the rights of neutrality. While the "Armstrong" was thus lying in the port, a British squadron, composed of the "Plantagenet" seventy-four, the "Rota" thirty-eight, and "Carnation" eighteen, hove in sight, and soon swung into the harbor and dropped anchor. Reid watched the movements of the enemy with eager vigilance. He knew well that the protection of Portugal would not aid him in the least should the captain of that seventy-four choose to open fire upon the "Armstrong." The action of the British in coming into the harbor was in itself suspicious, and the American had little doubt that the safety of his vessel was in jeopardy. While he was pacing the deck, and weighing in his mind the probability of an assault by the British, he caught sight of some unusual stir aboard the hostile ships. It was night; but the moon had risen, and by its pale light Reid saw four large barges let fall from the enemy's ships, and, manned by about forty men each, make toward his vessel. In an instant every man on the privateer was called to his post. That there was to be an attack, was now certain; and the Americans determined not to give up their vessel without at least a vigorous attempt to defend her. Reid's first act was to warp his craft under the guns of a rather dilapidated castle, which was supposed to uphold the authority of Portugal over the island and adjacent waters. Hardly had the position

been gained, when the foremost of the British boats came within hail, and Capt. Reid shouted, "Boat ahoy! What boat's that?" No response followed the hail; and it was repeated, with the warning, "Answer, or I shall fire into you." Still the British advanced without responding; and Reid, firmly convinced that they purposed to carry his ship with a sudden dash, ordered his gunners to open on the boats with grape. This was done, and at the first volley the British turned and made off. Capt. Reid then warped his vessel still nearer shore; and bending springs on her cable, so that her broadside might be kept always toward the enemy, he awaited a second attack. At midnight the enemy were seen advancing again, this time with fourteen barges and about five hundred men. While the flotilla was still at long range, the Americans opened fire upon them with the heavy "Long Tom;" and, as they came nearer, the full battery of long nine-pounders took up the fight. The carnage in the advancing boats was terrible; but the plucky Englishmen pushed on, meeting the privateer's fire with volleys of musketry and carronades. Despite the American fire, the British succeeded in getting under the bow and quarter of the "Armstrong," and strove manfully to board; while the Americans fought no less bravely to keep them back. The attack became a furious hand-to-hand battle. From behind the boarding-nettings the Americans thrust pikes, and fired pistols and muskets, at their assailants, who, mounted on each other's shoulders, were hacking fiercely at the nettings which kept them from gaining the schooner's deck. The few that managed to clamber on the taffrail of the "Armstrong" were thrust through and through with pikes, and hurled, thus horribly impaled, into the sea. The fighting was fiercest and deadliest on the quarter; for there were most of the enemy's boats, and there Capt. Reid led the defence in person. So hot was the reception met by the British at this point, that they drew off in dismay, despairing of ever gaining the privateer's deck. Hardly did Reid see the enemy thus foiled on the quarter, when a chorus of British cheers from the fore-castle, mingled with yells of rage, told that the enemy had succeeded in effecting a lodgement there. Calling his men about him, the gallant captain dashed forward and was soon in the front rank of the defenders, dealing

furious blows with his cutlass, and crying out, "Come on, my lads, and we'll drive them into the sea." The leadership of an officer was all that the sailors needed. The three lieutenants on the forecastle had been killed or disabled, else the enemy had never come aboard. With Reid to cheer them on, the sailors rallied, and with a steady advance drove the British back into their boats. The disheartened enemy did not return to the attack, but returned to their ships, leaving behind two boats captured and two sunk. Their loss in the attack was thirty-four killed and eighty-six wounded. On the privateer were two killed and seven wounded.

But the attack was not to end here. Reid was too old a sailor to expect that the British, chagrined as they were by two repulses, were likely to leave the privateer in peace. He well knew that the withdrawal of the barges meant not an abandonment, but merely a short discontinuance, of the attack. Accordingly he gave his crew scarcely time to rest, before he set them to work getting the schooner in trim for another battle. The wounded were carried below, and the decks cleared of splinters and wreckage. The boarding-nettings were patched up, and hung again in place. "Long Tom" had been knocked off his carriage by a carronade shot, and had to be remounted; but all was done quickly, and by morning the vessel was ready for whatever might be in store for her. The third assault was made soon after daybreak. Evidently the enemy despaired of his ability to conquer the privateersmen in a hand-to-hand battle; for this time he moved the brig "Carnation" up within range, and opened fire upon the schooner. The man-of-war could fire nine guns at a broadside, while the schooner could reply with but seven; but "Long Tom" proved the salvation of the privateer. The heavy twenty-four-pound shots from this gun did so much damage upon the hull of the brig, that she was forced to draw out of the action; leaving the victory, for the third time, with the Americans.

But now Capt. Reid decided that it was folly to longer continue the conflict. The overwhelming force of the enemy made any thought of ultimate escape folly. It only remained for the British to move the

seventy-four "Plantagenet" into action to seal the doom of the Yankee privateer. The gallant defence already made by the Americans had cost the British nearly three hundred men in killed and wounded; and Reid now determined to destroy his vessel, and escape to the shore. The great pivot-gun was accordingly pointed down the main hatch, and two heavy shots sent crashing through the bottom. Then applying the torch, to make certain the work of destruction, the privateersmen left the ship, giving three cheers for the gallant "Gen. Armstrong," as a burst of flame and a roar told that the flames had reached her magazine.

This gallant action won loud plaudits for Capt. Reid when the news reached the United States. Certainly no vessel of the regular navy was ever more bravely or skilfully defended than was the "Gen. Armstrong." But, besides the credit won for the American arms, Reid had unknowingly done his country a memorable service. The three vessels that attacked him were bound to the Gulf of Mexico, to assist in the attack upon New Orleans. The havoc Reid wrought among their crews, and the damage he inflicted upon the "Carnation," so delayed the New Orleans expedition, that Gen. Jackson was able to gather those motley troops that fought so well on the plains of Chalmette. Had it not been for the plucky fight of the lads of the "Gen. Armstrong," the British forces would have reached New Orleans ten days earlier, and Packenham's expedition might have ended very differently.

The "Plantagenet" and her consorts were not the only British men-of-war bound for New Orleans that fell in with warlike Yankee privateers. Some of the vessels from the Chesapeake squadron met a privateer, and a contest ensued, from which the American emerged with less glory than did the lads of the "Gen. Armstrong." A young British officer in his journal thus tells the story:—

"It was my practice to sit for hours, after nightfall, upon the taffrail, and strain my eyes in the attempt to distinguish objects on shore, or strange sails in the distance. It so happened that on the 30th I was tempted to indulge in this idle but bewitching employment even beyond my usual hour for retiring, and did not quit the deck till towards two

o'clock in the morning of the 31st [of October]. I had just entered my cabin, and was beginning to undress, when a cry from above of an enemy in chase drew me instantly to the quarter-deck. On looking astern I perceived a vessel making directly after us, and was soon convinced of the justice of the alarm, by a shot which whistled over our heads. All hands were now called to quarters, the small sails taken in; and having spoken to our companion, and made an agreement as to position, both ships cleared for action. But the stranger, seeing his signal obeyed with so much alacrity, likewise slackened sail, and, continuing to keep us in view, followed our wake without approaching nearer. In this state things continued till daybreak, — we still holding our course, and he hanging back; but, as soon as it was light, he set more sail and ran to windward, moving just out of gun-shot in a parallel direction with us. It was now necessary to fall upon some plan of deceiving him; otherwise, there was little probability that he would attack. In the bomb, indeed, the height of the bulwarks served to conceal some of the men; but in the transport no such screen existed. The troops were therefore ordered below; and only the sailors, a few blacks, and the officers kept the deck. The same expedient was likewise adopted in part by Capt. Price of the 'Volcano;' and, in order to give to his ship a still greater resemblance than it already had to a merchantman, he displayed an old faded scarlet ensign, and drew up his fore and main sail in what sailors term a lubberly manner.

"As yet the stranger had shown no colors, but from her build and rigging there was little doubt as to her country. She was a beautiful schooner, presenting seven ports of a side, and apparently crowded with men, — circumstances which immediately led us to believe that she was an American privateer. The 'Volcano,' on the other hand, was a clumsy, strong-built ship, carrying twelve guns; and the 'Golden Fleece' mounted eight: so that in point of artillery the advantage was rather on our side; but the American's sailing was so much superior to that of either of us, that this advantage was more than counter-balanced.

"Having dodged us till eight o'clock, and reconnoitred with great exact-

ness, the stranger began to steer gradually nearer and nearer, till at length it was judged that she was within range. A gun was accordingly fired from the 'Volcano,' and another from the transport; the balls from both of which passed over her, and fell into the sea. Finding herself thus assaulted, she now threw off all disguise, and hung out an American ensign. When putting her helm up, she poured a broadside with a volley of musketry into the transport, and ran alongside of the bomb, which sailed to windward.

"As soon as her flag was displayed, and her intention of attacking discerned, all hands were ordered up; and she received two well-directed broadsides from the 'Volcano,' as well as a warm salute from the 'Golden Fleece.' But such was the celerity of her motion, that she was alongside of the bomb in less time than can be imagined, and actually dashing her bow against the other, attempted to carry her by boarding. Capt. Price, however, was ready to receive them. The boarders were at their posts in an instant; and Jonathan finding, to use a vulgar phrase, that he had caught a Tartar, left about twenty men upon the 'Volcano's' bowsprit, all of whom were thrown into the sea, and filling his sails sheered off with the same speed with which he had borne down. In attempting to escape, he unavoidably fell somewhat to leeward, and exposed the whole of his deck to the fire of the transport. A tremendous discharge of musketry saluted him as he passed; and it was almost laughable to witness the haste with which his crew hurried below, leaving none upon deck except such as were absolutely wanted to work the vessel.

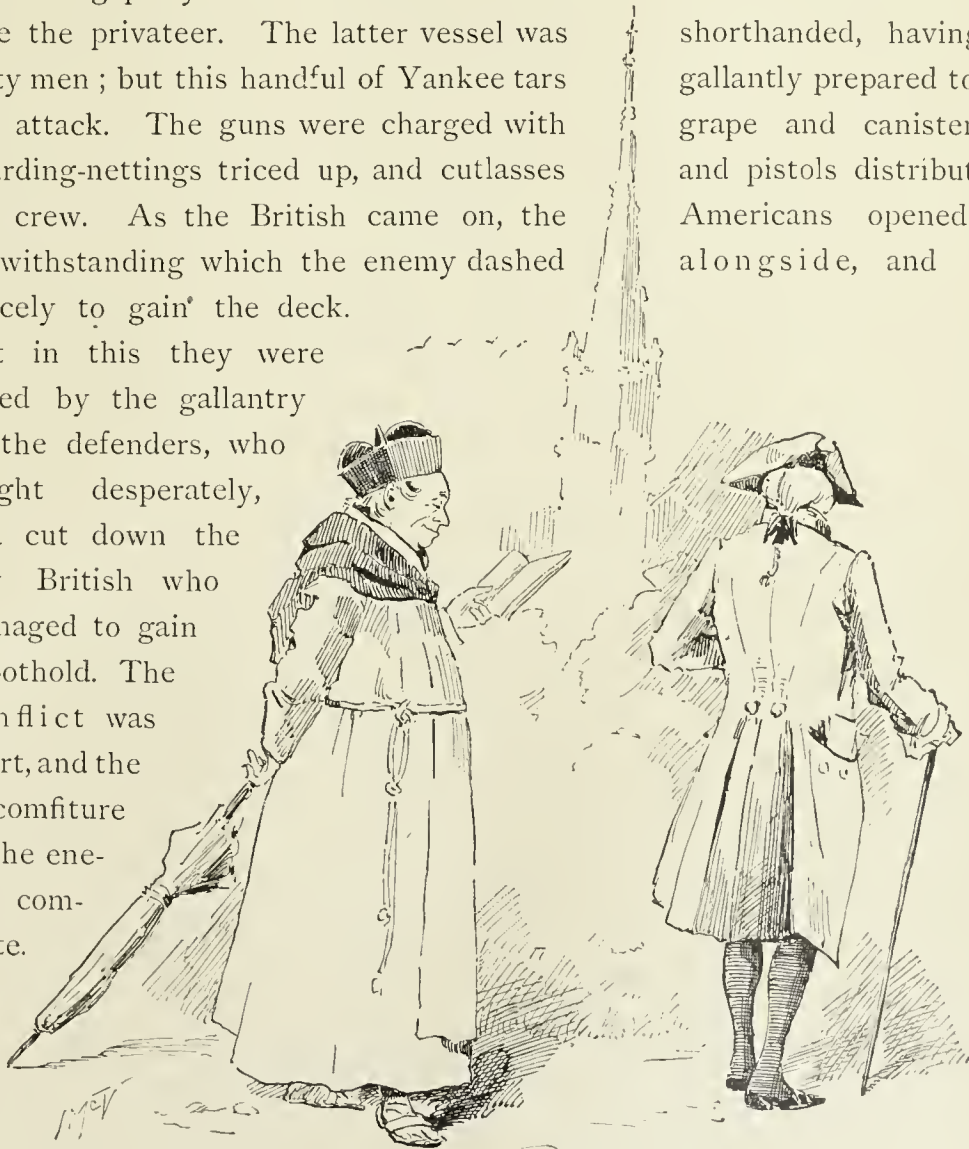
"The 'Volcano' had by this time filled and gave chase, firing with great precision at his yards and rigging, in the hope of disabling him. But, as fortune would have it, none of his important ropes or yards were cut; and we had the mortification to see him in a few minutes beyond our reach."

An exploit of yet another privateer should be chronicled before the subject of the private armed navy can be dismissed. On the 11th of October, 1814, the brigantine privateer "Prince de Neufchatel," seventeen guns, was encountered near Nantucket by the British frigate "Endymion," — the same

ship which was so roughly handled by the "President" in her last battle. About nine o'clock at night, a calm having come on, the frigate despatched a boarding party of a hundred and eleven men in five boats to capture the privateer. The latter vessel was forty men; but this handful of Yankee tars the attack. The guns were charged with boarding-nettings triced up, and cutlasses the crew. As the British came on, the notwithstanding which the enemy dashed fiercely to gain the deck.

But in this they were foiled by the gallantry of the defenders, who fought desperately, and cut down the few British who managed to gain a foothold. The conflict was short, and the discomfiture of the enemy complete.

men in five boats to capture the privateer, having but gallantly prepared to meet grape and canister, the and pistols distributed to Americans opened fire, alongside, and strove



PRISON CHAPLAIN AND JAILOR.

After but a few minutes' fighting, one boat was sunk, one captured, and the other three drifted helplessly away, filled with dead and dying. The total loss of the British in this affair was twenty-eight killed and thirty-

seven wounded. Of the crew of the privateer, seven were killed, and nine only remained unhurt.

A narrative of the exploits of, and service done by, the American sailors in the War of 1812 would be incomplete if it said nothing of the sufferings of that great body of tars who spent the greater part of the war season confined in British prisons. Several thousand of these were thrown into confinement before the war broke out, because they refused to serve against their country in British ships. Others were prisoners of war. No exact statistics as to the number of Americans thus imprisoned have ever been made public; but the records of one great prison—that at Dartmoor—show, that, when the war closed, six thousand American seamen were imprisoned there, twenty-five hundred of whom had been detained from long before the opening of the war, on account of their refusal to join the ranks of the enemy. As I write, there lies before me a quaint little book, put out anonymously in 1815, and purporting to be the “Journal of a Young Man captured by the British.” Its author, a young surgeon of Salem, named Waterhouse, shipped on a Salem privateer, and was captured early in the war. His experience with British prisons and transport-ships was long; and against his jailors he brings shocking charges of brutality, cruelty, and negligence.

The Yankee seamen who were captured during the war were first consigned to receiving-prisons at the British naval stations in America. Sometimes these places of temporary detention were mouldering hulks, moored in bays or rivers; sometimes huge sheds hastily put together, and in which the prisoners were kept only by the unceasing vigilance of armed guards. “The prison at Halifax,” writes Waterhouse, “erected solely for the safe-keeping of prisoners of war, resembles an horse-stable, with stalls, or stanchions, for keeping the cattle from each other. It is to a contrivance of this sort that they attach the cords that support those canvas bags or cradles, called hammocks. Four tier of these hanging nests were made to hang, one above the other, between these stalls, or stanchions. . . . The general hum and confused noise from almost every hammock was at first very distressing. Some would be lamenting their

hard fate at being shut up like negro slaves in a Guinea ship, or like fowls in a hen-coop, for no crime, but for fighting the battles of their country; others, late at night, were relating their adventures to a new prisoner; others, lamenting their aberrations from rectitude, and disobedience to parents, and headstrong wilfulness, that drove them to sea, contrary to their parents' wish; while others, of the younger class, were sobbing out their lamentations at the thoughts of what their mothers and sisters suffered after knowing of their imprisonment. Not unfrequently the whole night was spent in this way; and when, about day-break, the weary prisoner fell into a doze, he was waked from his slumber by the grinding noise of the locks, and the unbarring of the doors, with the cry of '*Turn out! All out!*' when each man took down his hammock, and lashed it up, and slung it on his back, and was ready to answer to the roll-call of the turnkey."

From prisons such as this, the prisoners were conveyed in droves to England, in the holds of men-of-war and transports. Poorly fed, worse housed, and suffering for lack of air and room, their agony on the voyage was terrible. When they were allowed a few hours' time on deck, they were sure to arouse the anger of the officers by turbulent conduct or imprudent retorts. "One morning as the general and the captain of the '*Regulus*' (transport) were walking as usual on the quarter-deck, one of our Yankee boys passed along the galley with his kid of burgoo. He rested it on the hatchway while he adjusted the rope ladder to descend with his swill. The thing attracted the attention of the general, who asked the man how many of his comrades eat of that quantity for their breakfast. 'Six, sir,' said the man, 'but it is fit food only for hogs.' This answer affronted the captain, who asked the man in an angry tone, 'What part of America he came from?' 'Near to Bunker Hill, sir, if you ever heard of that place,' was the answer." On another occasion, a Yankee and a slightly wounded British marine got into a dispute, and came to blows. The British captain saw the occurrence, and accused the American of cowardice in striking a wounded man. "I am no coward, sir," said the Yankee. "I was captain of a gun on board the '*Constitution*' when she

captured the 'Guerriere,' and afterward when she took the 'Java.' Had I been a coward, I should not have been there."

On one occasion the prisoners on the transport "Crown Prince," lying in the River Medway, took an uncontrollable dislike to the commander of a second transport lying close alongside. Their spite was gratified quickly and with great effect. The rations served out to the luckless captives at that time consisted of fish and cold potatoes. The latter edible being of rather poor quality, the prisoners reserved for missiles; and the obnoxious officer could not pace his quarter-deck without being made a mark for a shower of potatoes. Vainly did he threaten to call up his marines and respond with powder and lead: the Americans were not to be kept down; and for some days the harassed officer hardly dared to show himself upon deck.

The place of final detention for most of the prisoners taken in the war with America was Dartmoor Prison; a rambling collection of huge frame buildings, surrounded by double walls of wood. The number of prisoners confined there, and the length of time which many of them had spent within its walls, gave this place many of the characteristics of a small State, with rulers and officials of its own. One of the strangest characters of the prison was King Dick, a gigantic negro, who ruled over the five or six hundred negro prisoners. "He is six feet five inches in height," says one of the prisoners, "and proportionally large. This black Hercules commands respect, and his subjects tremble in his presence. He goes the rounds every day, and visits every berth, to see if they all are kept clean. When he goes the rounds, he puts on a large bear-skin cap, and carries in his hand a huge club. If any of his men are dirty, drunken, or grossly negligent, he threatens them with a beating; and if they are saucy they are sure to receive one. They have several times conspired against him, and attempted to dethrone him; but he has always conquered the rebels. One night several attacked him while asleep in his hammock: he sprang up, and seized the smallest by his feet, and thumped another with him. The poor negro, who had thus been made a beetle of, was carried the next day to the hospital, sadly bruised, and provokingly



KING DICK AND HIS CHAPLAIN.

laughed at." King Dick, to further uphold his dignity as a monarch, had his private chaplain, who followed his royal master about, and on Sundays preached rude but vigorous sermons to His Majesty's court. On week-days the court was far from being a dignified gathering. King Dick was a famous athlete, and in the cock-loft, over which he reigned, was to be seen fine boxing and fencing. Gambling, too, was not ruled out of the royal list of amusements; and the cries of the players, mingled with the singing of the negroes, and the sounds of the musical instruments upon which they played, made that section of the prison a veritable pandemonium.

But although some few incidents occurred to brighten momentarily the dull monotony of the prisoners' lot, the life of these unfortunate men, while thus imprisoned, was miserable and hateful to them. Months passed, and even years, but there seemed to be no hope for release. At last came the news of the declaration of peace. How great then was the rejoicing! Thoughts of home, of friends and kindred, flooded the minds of all; and even strong men, whom the hardships of prison-life had not broken down, seemed to give way all at once to tears of joy. But the delays of official action, "red-tape," and the sluggishness of travel in that day, kept the poor fellows pent up for months after the treaty of peace had been announced to them. Nor were they to escape without suffering yet more severely at the hands of their jailors. Three months had passed since peace had been declared; and the long delay so irritated the prisoners, that they chafed under prison restraint, and showed evidences of a mutinous spirit. The guards, to whom was intrusted the difficult task of keeping in subjection six thousand impatient and desperate men, grew nervous, fearing that at any moment the horde of prisoners would rise and sweep away all before them. An outbreak was imminent; and the prisoners were like a magazine of gunpowder, needing but a spark of provocation to explode. On April 6, 1815, matters reached a crisis. The soldiers, losing all presence of mind, fired on the defenceless Americans, killing five men and wounding thirty-four. Thus the last blood shed in the War of 1812 was the blood of unarmed prisoners. But the massacre, horrible and inexcusable as it was, had the effect of

hastening the release of the survivors; and soon the last of the captives was on his way home to the country over which peace at last reigned again.

Here we must leave the blue-jackets who so bravely fought for "free trade and sailors' rights." Their place in history is a great and noble



THE LAST VOLLEY OF THE WAR.

one. As the ragged Continentals of '76 brought a new nation into existence, so the blue-jackets of 1812 defended the honor of that nation, and first gave its flag an honorable place upon the ocean. Sixty years later, when the safety of that flag was endangered, their descendants rallied to its defence; and some of the midshipmen of the days of 1812 were admirals and commodores in '61. Should ever, in future times, the

young Republic of the West need the services of its fighting Jack Tars on the ocean, many of the names famous in the naval annals of the past will re-appear in the naval lists of the time of action. By the records of history the United States navy can prove, that, in courage, dash, and seamanlike character, its officers and men have never been outdone. The present day sees the service languishing, through unwise legislation which has permitted the nation to find itself without a single vessel available for active and effective service against the navy of any first-class power. That this results simply from the re-action from the tremendous efforts of the late civil war, is certain; and that in the future the United States will have a navy suited to her place among nations, seems now probable. And if this simple story of some of the achievements of a past generation of blue-jackets shall win one adherent to the cause of the navy of the future, the purpose of the work will be fulfilled.



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